

Understanding the Non-verbal of Communication

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."

- Peter F. Drucker

Have you attended a meeting where the exchange was cordial and appeared effective but you left feeling a little unsettled? While introspecting surprisingly you seemed to be recalling the tone of voice, eye contact and handshake rather than the conversation.

Dr. Albert Mehrabian, author of *Silent Messages*, conducted numerous studies on the efficacy of communication. His findings were profound - 7% of any message is conveyed through words, 38% through tone of voice, and 55% through nonverbal like facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc. Since tone of voice is also a non-verbal, the total impact of body language on communication is 93%. Quite a staggering figure! The passion of a message is conveyed more through the tone of voice and the body language of a speaker. The sadness of an event is transmitted more through tears and silence and less through the expression of words. So, in short, the receiver is hearing the sender's message more through body language than the words that are used.



"The human body is the best picture of the human soul." - Ludwig Wittgenstein

So knowing this, how can we improve our communication?

Neuro-Linguistic Programming encompasses the three most important components involved in producing human interactions: neurology, speech and programming. The neurological system controls our bodily functions, speech determines how we interact and communicate with other people and our programming determines the kinds of mental models of the world that we create from our experiences. Neuro-Linguistic Programming deals with the how the interplay between mind (neuro) and language (linguistic) affects our body and behavior (programming).

"But behavior in the human being is sometimes a defense, a way of concealing motives and thoughts, as language can be a way of hiding your thoughts and preventing communication." - Abraham Maslow

Hence, it is important to observe body language and tone of voice when in conversations to detect hidden messages.

We can infer that our thoughts affect our body language. However, does it also work the other way around? There is emerging research by Amy Cuddy that states that by consciously shifting your body language you can

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shift your thoughts (thus changing what you speak).

The important point is that both schools of thought do not deny the strong link between thought and body language.

Using these principles, below are 3 ways in which we can improve our effectiveness in conversations:

- Preparation which includes self-talk will enhance your confidence levels
- While getting into the conversation, move into a posture that demonstrates greater confidence such as squared shoulders and prepare for direct eye contact
- Ensure that you get into the conversation with a belief that the outcome will be a win-win for both parties

Our communication training focuses on techniques that enhance spoken, written and non-verbal communication. Role-plays are used for participants to learn the application of the concepts. This makes them adept at using these skills immediately.

“What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Author Bio:

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