

## COMMUNICATION: PART II

It is past time to pay attention to nonverbal communication, which means behavior. Of all the types of communication, behavior is believable—more so than verbal communication. It is an independent messaging system that is applied differently by every person. The usual nonverbal behavior is often accompanied by verbal content. The match between non-verbal and verbal communication is a learned skill, and understanding the observed meaning is a leadership skill.

Behavior awareness states what you see the person (in behavioral terms) is doing or has done. This behavior requires that you place no judgment on what you see—just that you see it. The leader comments on the witnessed behavior—doing nothing more than that! The person doing the behavior is then aware that the behavior is observed. The leader commenting on the behavior expects an answer from the person performing the behavior.

Example: The person observing says, “John, you have wandered up and down the hall at least four times within the last five minutes.” John has now had an opportunity to become more aware of his behavior and consequently make a remark regarding the behavior, change the behavior, apologize for the behavior, or you have just reoriented him to the behavior of which he was not fully aware. It is common for the person to try to explain the behavior verbally, and a person usually likes to place their judgment as to the reason for their behavior. Regardless, John is now more self-aware, maybe he can redirect his behavior, or perhaps you will find out information about John’s wanderings that would be new information for you due to his explanation.

As a leader, it is interesting and informative to hear what reason(s) are given for an observed behavior(s)!

The “Transparent Effect” says that we all are more transparent than we realize! However, the key to recognizing this effect is correctly interpreting the non-verbal behavior. As a leader, recognize other individuals’ diverse and unique transparent behavioral effects.

A leader’s body language: Crossing your legs away from a person and folding your arms while talking with a person might show resistance to what is said. Arms at your side or open slightly away from the body show acceptance of what is being verbally communicated by another person. To show acceptance and listen to a person while seated, cross your legs so that your body is turned slightly toward the person or merely turn toward the person.

Communication (verbal and nonverbal behaviors) are different in cultures and subcultures. Some cultures require distancing the person from a stranger, whereas others value closeness. For example, it is desirable in Arabic culture to be as close as possible to the conversation—close enough to feel a person’s breath. To determine another person’s comfortable space, watch their behavior as you offer a handshake or a hug.

The Coronavirus problem requires careful consideration of the environment when communicating. When a conversation between people is desired or necessary, have an open environment rather than communicating in a confined work setting. Handshakes or hugs are often unacceptable since the start of the coronavirus issue.

Goodbye for August. In September (Part III), read about space, colors, and mood shaping the communicative behavior of ourselves and others. It is a trigger of conscious and unconscious perceptions, and our perceptions, in turn, determine our behavior.

As a leader, sharpening your communication skills is indicative of intellectual sharpness. Recognizing communication (verbal or non-verbal) is necessary to manipulate desired leadership outcomes.

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