

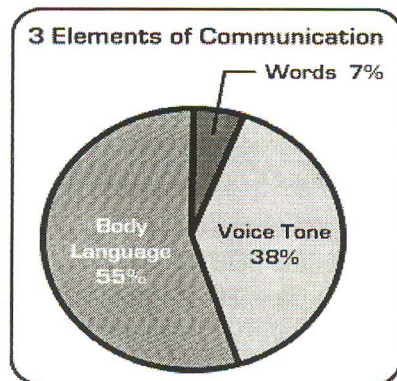
An analytical study on the role and effectiveness of non-verbal communication in motivating employees in modern organizations

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Non-verbal Communication refers to “all external stimuli other than spoken or written words and including body motion, characteristics of appearance, voice and use of space and distancing”..In day-to-day business interactions, one keeps on interpreting non-verbal clues without being aware of doing so. The job of a manager at the workplace is to get things done through employees for which he should be able to motivate them. If the nonverbal cues are not in tune with the spoken messages, the flow of communication is hindered and it may result in wrong interpretations.

This research study aims at developing a deeper understanding on the role and effectiveness of Non-verbal Communication in motivating employees in business organizations

When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of oratory he answered, “action”; and which was the second, he replied, “action”; and which was third he still answered, “action.” People tend to believe actions more than words!



Researchers today are concerned with the information sent by communication that is independent of and different from verbal information; namely, the non-verbal communication. Nonverbal communication is defined as the process by which nonverbal behaviors are used, either singly or in combination with verbal behaviors, in the exchange and interpretation of messages within a given situation or context. It includes apparent behaviors such as facial expressions, eyes, touching, and tone of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture and spatial distance between two or more people. Everything communicates including material objects, physical space, and time systems. Although verbal output can be turned off, nonverbal cannot. Even silence speaks.

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Nonverbal communication cues can play many roles:

- Repetition
- Contradiction
- Substitution
- Complementing:

Literature Review :

Possession of key nonverbal skills is likely a prerequisite for adequate psychosocial adjustment (e.g., Argyle, 1981; Phillips, 1978; Trower, Bryant, & Argyle, 1978). The skill approach to the study of nonverbal communication has received its greatest impetus from the work of Rosenthal and his colleagues (e.g., Rosenthal, 1979; Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, & Archer, 1979).

However, there is a small but growing number of social scientists who are becoming interested in this nonverbal skill approach. Researchers in the field of communication are beginning to study nonverbal communication from an individual differences perspective (see, e.g., McCroskey & Daly, 1987). Developmental psychologists have explored the relationships between nonverbal abilities in children and the development of social skills and social competence (e.g., Feldman, White, & Lobato, 1982; Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Wright, & Jarvis, 1968; Matson & Ollendick, 1988; Rubin & Ross, 1982). Clinical/counseling psychologists and psychiatrists have begun to realize that competence in nonverbal communication is an important component of adequate psychosocial adjustment and social competence (e.g., Hollin & Trower, 1986; Phillips, 1978; Wine & Smye, 1981). They join the personality and social psychologists who are also beginning to give greater attention to individual differences in interaction skills in general, and nonverbal skills, in particular.

Friedman (1979) outlined some of the advantages of studying nonverbal communication from this skill approach for social and personality psychologists. For example, because much of nonverbal communication involves the communication of emotion, there is a shift in focus from studying cognitive-verbal aspects of social life to a renewal of interest in the study of emotion. Also, the nonverbal skill approach advocates viewing individual differences in terms of "abilities" rather than traits, and, Friedman asserted, approaching the measurement of personality in terms of abilities will likely prove a more reliable and valid approach than the traditional assessment of

traits, because the assessment of abilities implies that there are "correct" and "incorrect" answers to measures of nonverbal skill, unlike the traditional self-report assessments of personality traits. Therefore, besides being a different theoretical perspective to studying nonverbal communication, the skill approach also represents a methodological innovation for researchers studying social interaction processes.

A large body of literature is concerned with the nonverbal expression of emotions, through facial expressions (Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 1972), tone of voice and other paralinguistic cues (Scherer, 1979; Zuckerman, Larrance, Hall, DeFrank, & Rosenthal, 1979), and/or posture and body movements (Ekman, 1965; Ekman, Friesen, O'Sullivan, & Scherer, 1980).

There have been hundreds of published investigations of nonverbal decoding skill. For example, Hall (1985) has found 120 studies alone that deal with gender differences in nonverbal decoding. Nonverbal sensitivity is hypothesized to be a key component of empathy (Riggio, Tucker, & Coffaro, 1989), and some researchers believe that nonverbal decoding skill is at the core of social intelligence (Archer, 1980; see also Sternberg & Smith, 1985).

Mehrabian's research provided the basis for the widely quoted and often much over-simplified statistic for the effectiveness of spoken communications. 7% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken. 38% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said). 55% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression.

The importance of effective recognition of the nonverbal cues is difficult to overestimate. According to popular scholarly beliefs, between 60 and 93 percent of the meaning in the interaction may be generated by the nonverbal aspects of communication (Leigh 2). Some break it down even further stating that "people respond to body language 55 percent of the time, tone of voice 38 percent of the time, and actual words a mere 7 percent" (Arthur 2). As business organizations and interactions become more and more complex, the room for error diminishes greatly and the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining the competitive edge become increasingly important. Areas of sales, consulting, auditing, investment banking and many others where primary business revolves around client interaction, information acquisition and analysis, and persuading

individuals are the ones that must be extremely effective in nonverbal communication. For example, a sale manager communicating with a new client over the telephone can benefit from skillful utilization of paralanguage, because the initial call creates a base on which the future interaction and is built (Leigh 1). In the service industry, the recognition and acceptance of nonverbal communication can benefit the employees as well as the business process in general. Customer satisfaction depends on more than just adequate execution of the service; it also includes the nonverbal context of what is being done or said. Managers who realize the significance of the nonverbal aspect of communication and the effects it has on the success of the business interaction will be able to seek out individuals with better developed nonverbal communication skills and integrate them in the optimal position of the business process (Gabbot 9).

Objectives of the Paper:

- To study the role played by non-verbal communication in motivating employees at their workplaces
- To compare the effectiveness of various elements of non-verbal communication
- To understand employee interpretation of non-verbal cues given out by superiors and their impact on motivating employees

Research Methodology

This research study aims at developing a deeper understanding about the role and effectiveness of non-verbal communication in motivating employees at their workplaces. The study was conducted with a total sample of 110 employees. The respondents were selected by convenience sampling and were from different sectors viz. IT, ITES, Education, Financial Services, Insurance, Pharmaceuticals and Retail. The data was analysed by means of percentage analysis.

Respondents' profile

Out of 110 respondents, a little more than half (i.e. around 56%) were male, though every effort was made to ensure equal representation of both the sexes..

A good majority of the respondents were married (i.e. 71%), while 22% were single and 8% belonged to other categories like divorcees, widows, etc.

68 respondents (i.e.62%) belonged to the age group of 35-45 years, while employees in the 25-35 year age

group were 37 (34%)

A little less than half of the respondents (i.e. 46%) had a work experience of 5 to 10 years, while almost equal number of respondents (i.e.48%) had worked for less than 5 years. Only a handful (i.e. 4%) of respondents had a work experience of more than 10 years.

Effectiveness of various elements of non-verbal communication

In line with the findings of various studies discussed above, this present study indicates that the elements of nonverbal communication, which employees felt were highly effective in motivating them were facial expressions, body language and posture, gestures and eye gaze. On the other hand, some elements like physical appearance, haptics, paralanguage and proxemics were found to be less impressive by most of the respondents.

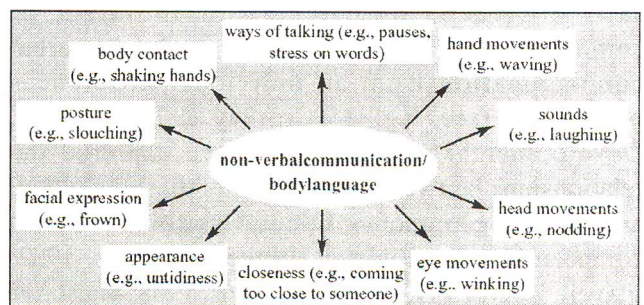


Figure –1 Elements of Non-verbal Communication

Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication .A good deal of our information about people's emotional state from the expressions on their faces. Facial expressions can convey a range of feelings from happiness, interest, and displeasure to fear, anger, sadness and many more. A good manager is one who can complement his words with appropriate facial expressions and inspire subordinates to put in their best efforts.

Gestures

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. Gestures permit a degree of expressiveness and subtlety that is not possible with other aspects of non-verbal communication. Gestures should be carefully used, as it is quite prone to errors.

Body language and posture

Posture and body language can also convey a great deal of information. Different body movements at

different points of time can actually help managers to transmit messages

silently and efficiently. Body language and gesture meanings do not always stay the same. Sometimes meanings change over time, or meanings change when cultures mix together.

Eye gaze

A major feature of social communication is eye contact. It can convey emotion; signal when to talk or finish, or aversion. Most employees felt that sometimes looking into the eyes can be much more imperative and effective than words.

Physical appearance

The physical appearance of a person in the form of the choice of color, clothing, hairstyles and related factors affecting the appearance also play a role in conveying emotions.

Haptics

Haptics is another feature of non-verbal communication. A lot can be conveyed through touch. In this study, employees revealed that a pat on the back was more than enough to understand that their manager was appreciating them.

Paralanguage

This factor refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. This includes dynamics such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection and pitch. The tone of voice can have a powerful impact on the meaning of a sentence. A strong tone of voice by superiors is interpreted as approval and enthusiasm; while the same words spoken in a hesitant tone might convey disapproval and a lack of interest.

Proxemics

Proxemics or personal space is of considerable value in non-verbal communication. A number of factors including social norms, situational factors, personality characteristics and level of familiarity influence the amount of distance one requires in between while in conversation with others. Through this research study, this researcher could conclude that acts like making employees sit close to him at the desk in a business meeting revealed the superior's liking of his subordinate.

Analysis

Table 1 shows the ratings given by respondents to different parameters of non-verbal communication.

Table -1 Important parameters of non-verbal communication

Parameters	Highly Effective	Effective	Effective to some extent	Less Effective	Highly Ineffective	Mean	S.D
	5	4	3	2	1		
Facial expressions	35	45	24	5	1	22	18.92
	31.81%	40.90%	21.81%	4.55%	0.90%		
Body language and posture	30	38	22	11	9	22	12.35
	27.27%	34.54%	20%	10%	8.18%		
Gestures	43	37	15	8	7	22	16.85
	39.09	33.64	13.64	7.27	6.36		
Eye gaze	21	65	8	14	2	22	25.05
	19.09	59.09	7.27	12.73	1.82		
Physical appearance	16	23	57	6	8	22	20.70
	14.55	20.91	51.82	5.45	7.27		
Haptics	7	13	31	49	10	22	17.75
	6.36	11.82	28.18	44.55	9.09		
Paralanguage	5	7	22	34	42	22	16.26
	4.55	6.36	20.00	30.91	38.18		
Proxemics	5	9	15	40	41	22	17.26
	4.55	8.18	13.64	36.36	37.27		

- TABLE 2 GIVES THE INTERPRETATION OF NON-VERBAL CUES GIVEN OUT BY SUPERIORS/MANAGERS

Table 2– Employee interpretation of Non-verbal cues given out by superiors

Non –verbal cues	Interpretation
Keeping subordinates waiting	Demonstrate status
Completing subordinates' sentences before they have a chance to complete their own thoughts	Insulting
Excessive interruption of discussion by accepting phone calls or letting other interruptions interfere with the discussion	Giving less priority to what the employee is speaking
Looking down most of the times when an employee is speaking	Rejection of employee's idea
Patting an employee on the back	Encouraging an employee
Clapping after an employee has finished his words	Approval of the employee's idea

This research study had required employees to interpret the typical non-verbal cues given by their superiors or managers during communication at work. It is notable that the respondents could clearly understand and interpret the meaning of non-verbal signals sent out by their bosses. The respondents were asked to indicate their choice concerning the role of the following non-verbal elements of communication on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly agree while 5 means strongly disagree. A brief insight into these cues may be helpful.

➤ **Managers tend to demonstrate status by keeping subordinates waiting**

As expected, most of the respondents felt that whenever their superiors kept them waiting unnecessarily, it was to show off their status. In a healthy organization, the manager and his subordinates use time to communicate their mutual respect to each other. But when superiors for mere hypocrisy utilize this time factor in the adverse sense, it tends to demoralize employees as brought out by this study.

➤ **Completing subordinates' sentences before they have a chance to complete their own thoughts**

An interesting observation of the study was that employees value their self-respect and anyone who impairs it is looked down upon. In the present study, the employees felt that managers by not allowing the employees to express their thoughts completely were actually insulting them. It showed their lack of respect for their ideas and feelings.

➤ **Excessive interruption of discussion by accepting phone calls or letting other interruptions interfere with the discussion**

Almost all employees were of the opinion that by accepting phone calls or letting other interruptions interfere with the discussion, their superiors were sending out negative signals to them. Attending other phone calls (unless in an emergency), especially while discussing crucial issues indicates that perhaps something more important is in line.

Impact of non-verbal clues on employee motivation

This part of the study required the respondents to explain the impact of various non-verbal cues in motivating them. Through this exercise, this researcher could get a clear insight as to what employees expected from their managers.

A compliment by the superior accompanied by direct eye contact, a smile or handshake: -

There was almost a unanimous view that little non-verbal gestures like a smile or handshake played a significant role in conveying a message. Moreover, employees felt in high spirits when superiors expressed their concerns towards employees through them. Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication in our everyday life. A smile, even without words can inspire people.

When the manager walks away without reply to a greeting

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. In this study, employees pointed out that when managers ignore or don't respond properly to their greetings, they get disappointed and demotivated.

Yawning while an employee is speaking

One of the enthralling observations of the study was that people at their workplaces are receptive to various kinds of non-verbal signals and even the most commonplace gestures like yawning by superiors were taken to indicate lack of interest or boredom. Research has shown that when words fail to match up with nonverbal signals, people tend to ignore what has been said and focus instead on nonverbal expressions of moods, thoughts, and emotions

Managers while communicating make employees sit next to them at the desk

It is worth noting that employees also give substance to the seating arrangement and physical distance between superiors and subordinates. From the study, this researcher could figure out that occupying a seat next to the boss in a business meeting gave employees a sense of superiority and impetus. Research has shown that the amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet.

Implications of the study

Knowledge of non-verbal communication is important, especially for managers because as a team leader he should be able to interpret non-verbal cues correctly, thus enabling the team to function effectively. Managers who realize the significance of the nonverbal aspect of communication and effects it has on the success of the business interaction will be able to seek out individuals with better-developed

nonverbal communication skills and motivate them in the optimal position of the business process.

In an era where "human/social capital" is being increasingly valued by organizations and teamwork is employed to attain objectives, non-verbal communication is critically important to the development of good interpersonal relationships both at work and home. Leaders who are sensitive to and responsive to followers' needs (presumably much of this skill involves non-verbal decoding) consistently outperform leaders who lack sensitivity (Bass 1960.1990)

Limitations of the Study

The profile has been limited by demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. As all employees interviewed were salaried class, who had a busy schedule, the questionnaire had to be administered rapidly.

Conclusion

From the information presented, the importance of nonverbal communication in motivating employees in modern businesses is obvious. The fact that a great number of successful CEOs, auditors and sales people refer to psychology of human behavior as one of the most useful non-business skill they possess demonstrates the vitality of using such skill appropriately and effectively. Nonverbal cues may be unconsciously acted and reacted upon, regulating proximity, gestures, eye gaze and touch. Each component of nonverbal behavior affects our relationship and interpersonal environment in intricate ways. Nonverbal cues provide insight into affect states; influence another's perception of an individual's competence, persuasiveness, power, sincerity and vulnerability. A proper understanding of non-verbal cues is not a boon just for managers, but also for employees who, when empowered by this analytical tool, are likely to accomplish better results and avoid unnecessary confusions. Thus, it is important to be aware of the dominance of the nonverbal message. If there is disagreement between the verbal and nonverbal message, the nonverbal will win.

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