Building Your Personal Credibility Through Nonverbal Communication

Prepared Especially for the
University Business Institute
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“She’s Impressive…”
“He’s Sharp…”

How do some people simply “come off” so well?
A Person’s Credibility = Substance x Power x Openness

"But the truth is that accurate communication is really hard, and only a very small number of people can do it well. ... When someone does manage to properly integrate posture and gesture with speech, we tend to give them TV shows. Oprah is a great example. We also tend to elect them President — like Reagan and Clinton."

Malcolm Gladwell, author of Blink.
In face-to-face situations, 93% of your impact comes through nonverbal channels: 55% through body language and 38% through paralanguage.

Good Communicators Exhibit High Energy

HIGH ENERGY!
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Low Energy

Diminishes Everyone’s Impact

3 Nonverbal Zones

Stability

Mobility

Stability
Good Communicators are always **ANCHORED** in a solid speaker’s stance

- Balanced
- Off-Balance

If a person does not stand in a speaker’s stance, credibility is diminished by 38%.
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A too-high chin gives the unintended message of arrogance, remove, or belligerence.

Good communicators are anchored by their chin and head positions.
What do you “read” in this picture?

Zone of Mobility

Joints of Strength

Joints of Weakness
Two “Classes” of Gestures

Open Gestures  Closed Gestures

But what do I do with my HANDS??

Rule: One hand may not touch the other.
Find your comfortable “neutral position”

All but 3 have it right.

Standing “neutral position”
Sitting “neutral position”

Only 1 has it really right.

A good communicator’s hands are expressive and open
Leaving the solar plexus open builds approachability.

People who use open gestures and show their palms comfortably and frequently are more believable.
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Be sure all of your gestures are sincere

Finger-pointing is a negative indicator
Try not to make fists as you gesture. Fists are usually seen as hostile or combative.

Crossed arms indicate that a person is closed off.
Crossed arms while smiling can send a “mixed message”

Steer clear of “The Cowboy” power gesture
What do you “read” here?

Good communicators try never to have a barrier between themselves and others

Unfortunate

Got it right!

Very Unfortunate
Be especially careful of making *yourself* a barrier

Body Barriers for Protection
“Steepling” creates a barrier and can send mixed messages

“Steepling” can also mean “I’m thinking it over”
Clasped hands are power-robbers

How should you sit at a table for maximum impact?

- Lean forward, resting forearms on table
- Keep arms out of parallel
- Keep your “solar plexus” open and take up more body space
Always have both hands visible

Lifting your hands off the table shows more energy and commitment
Knee-crossing is not recommended, especially for women

Women should use the “Queen Elizabeth” ankle cross
What is your level of “Facial Affect?”

High?

or

Low?

Talking Through a Smile

You “read” people’s overall level of happiness by whether they talk through a pleasant expression, even on neutral subjects.
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The “Eyebrow Flash”

Elements of Good Eye Contact

Irises in the center of a person’s eyes indicate honesty and straightforwardness.
Sideways eye contact looks coy or flirtatious

Inappropriate

Appropriate

To build rapport, focus on the color of a person’s eyes
Good communicators build their vocal presence through paralanguage.

Tips for using your voice to build credibility

Work on your voice quality.
Tips for using your voice to build credibility

A warm voice invites collaboration.

How to Turn a Boring Message Into a Compelling Message

Really hit key words
Speak in short sentences
Increase your volume by 50% - 100%
Pause between sentences
Tips for using your voice as a leader to build credibility

Emphasize key words

“We are REALLY DEDICATED to the SUCCESS of this PROJECT.”

Tips for using your voice to build credibility

Stressing key words widens your “band of inflection.”

Not this...

But this...

HR’s POLICY is to VERIFY resumes THOROUGHLY.”

Emphasize key words to avoid a monotone.
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**Short sentences reduce “uptalk”**

**Tentative**

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**Definitive**

*Downward inflection is always better than “UPTALK.”*

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**Tips for using your voice to build credibility**

People who speak slightly louder than normal are seen as more intelligent and confident.
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Tips for using your voice to build credibility

Pause to let the audience “get” your thoughts

“Universities are addressing the funding shortage in creative ways.”

<PAUSE>

“One successful approach is...”

People should speak slightly faster than normal, but keep articulation clear

We can hear 750-800 wpm.

We speak at 150-160 wpm.
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Tips for using your voice to build credibility

Avoid fillers and hedges

“Ya know”
“Perhaps”
“I don’t know if this is the right time or not, but…”
“Well…”
“Um, uh…”
“Maybe...Sorta”
“Kinda”
“Like”

The nonverbal “winning edge” is:
Using body language to enhance your credibility
AND
Knowing how to read truth in other people’s body language.
How To Read People Between Their “Lines”

Highly Developed Professionals are Good “People-Readers”
When “Deception Detection” Works

Keen Observation Skills Are Most Vital When the Other Person is Managing His or Her Message

Con artists can even fool the “experts”... *for a time.*
This is the only foolproof way to tell if someone is lying.

The Concept of “Leaking”

People with a conscience will always reveal tension and discomfort when they aren’t being fully truthful.
### What People Can Control When Communicating Face-to-Face

(In Diminishing Order):

1. Words
2. Facial expressions
3. Eye contact
4. Hand gestures (emblems and illustrators)
5. Pacifying gestures
6. Whole body cues
7. Feet
8. Micro-expressions (including eye-covering)
9. Emblem “tells”
10. Pupil dilation

### Control Level 10: WORDS

"Freudian slips"  "mis-speaking"  "slips of the tongue"
Control Level 9: FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

The most common facial expression is the SMILE.

Paris Hilton
Eric Schmidt
CEO of Google
Control Level 8: EYE CONTACT PATTERNS

Control Level 7: HAND GESTURES

Sacha Baron Cohen as “Borat”
Control Level 6
(relatively unconscious):
PACIFYING GESTURES

Control Level 5
(relatively unconscious):
WHOLE BODY CUES
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Control Level 4
(relatively unconscious):

ANGLE OF FEET

Is she really in the picture?

Control Level 3
(always unconscious):

MICRO-EXPRESSIONS

Former NY Governor Eliot Spitzer: Contempt/Disgust
Mrs. Spitzer: Classic Sadness
The Seven Universal Emotions

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Surprise
- Fear
- Anger
- Contempt
- Disgust

Micro-expressions are always composed of one or more of these.

Classic Happiness
Classic Fear

FEAR
You think your plan was perfect.
You think you covered your tracks.
Now you’ve started to wonder.

Classic Anger
Classic Contempt

Classic Disgust
Control Level 2
(always unconscious):
EMBLEM “TELLS”

Control Level 1
(always unconscious):
PUPIL DILATION
Control Level 1
(always unconscious):

PUPIL DILATION

Which picture do you find more attractive?

Definitive Book of Body Language by Allan & Barbara Pease, p. 167

Detecting Dissonance
First, Always Find a Baseline

Katie Couric
What Body Cues to Look For...

Keeping Something In: Mouth-Covering
Keeping Something In: Mouth-Covering

Keeping Something In: Mouth-Covering
Feeling “On-the-Spot”: Nose-Touching

Feeling “On-the-Spot”: Nose-Touching
Feeling “On-the-Spot”: Nose-Touching

Keeping Something Out: Eye-Covering

Keeping Something Out: Eye-Covering

Keeping Something Out: Eye-Covering
Keeping Something Out: Heavy Blinking

Signifying Self-Consciousness: Pacifying Gestures (Preening)
Signifying Self-Consciousness: Pacifying Gestures


Angle of Feet Showing Exclusion/Inclusion

Feet that exclude

Feet that include
Leg Twitching

When a foot suddenly begins to kick, it is usually a good indicator of discomfort. You see this with people being interviewed, as soon as a question is asked they do not like.


Body Facing/Leaning
Barriers: Self-Inflicted

Barriers that Pacify
Barriers that Exclude


Micro-Expressions

“What you are thunders so loudly that I can not hear what you say to the contrary.”
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson