



**Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful**

Training | Coaching | Speaking
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Non-Verbal Communications Matter

When you meet someone or present to an audience, do your words match your non-verbal communications?

If there is a disconnect between verbal and non-verbal communications, your audience will believe your non-verbals. Studies show that more than 90% of our communication is non-verbal.

For example, imagine that a speaker shuffles to the podium, fumbling with his pen and folder. He stares down at his notes, frowns slightly and says in a lifeless monotone so soft that you can barely hear him, "I am excited to be here with you today. We are going to have a fun session together." Are you excited? Or are you running for the exit?

While his words may be correct, his non-verbal communications strongly contradict his verbal message. His voice, facial expression, body language and lack of eye contact broadcast a message of boredom and anxiety.

Non-verbal communications encompass many aspects, including:

- Voice: volume, tone, pausing, rate
- Body Language such as
 - Eye Contact
 - Facial Expression
 - Gestures
 - Movement and posture

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When you communicate through writing, punctuation provides cues for the reader as to your meaning and emotion. When speaking, however, you have to use your voice and body language to provide the punctuation for the audience. Here are some examples of effective non-verbal communications:

- A short pause before an important word
- An increase in volume on an important phrase
- Moving towards the audience when emphasizing a point
- Using your hands to make a relevant gesture, such as indicating geographic location ("our customers are everywhere, from Asia to South America")

How to Practice

One of the exercises that I use with communication skills classes is to give each person an index card with a word or a simple phrase on it, such as "fine" or "good-bye." Then each person has to stand and deliver that word or phrase in as many different ways as he or she can think of, varying the voice and body language each time to change the meaning. It's amazing how words and phrases can have different meanings, depending on the way they are expressed.

The next time you meet someone in a business setting or deliver a presentation, remember that if your non-verbals don't match your words, the audience will believe your non-verbals. So while you're preparing your content, be sure also to spend time practicing your delivery so your words will have the effect and meaning you intend.

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