

CLD1-3



Communication Essentials for Good Impressions

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Communication plays an important role in the leadership process. Communication helps a leader in building relationships, effectively delegating tasks, and even sharing the organization's vision with its members. But effective communication isn't necessarily natural—it takes some work to be good at communicating. Let's learn more about non-verbal communication (body language) and the roles speaking and active listening play in communication.

Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication can be as powerful as the spoken word. Just as what you say creates an impression on people, so does your appearance, how you carry yourself, and how you act toward people. Understanding what you are "saying" with your body and appearance is important, particularly when you are trying to make a good impression.


Having an active awareness of non-verbal communication can help you:

- Project an image of confidence
- Demonstrate power or influence
- Express sincerity, interest or cooperativeness
- Create trust
- Recognize personal tension

So what am I saying with my body language?

- **Arms**—When your arms are crossed it means your body is closed off. Take your hands out of your pockets and have your palms up to establish trust.
- **Eyes**—It's very important to keep and maintain good eye contact with someone. Look at the person when he or she is talking to you, look away once in a while so you're not staring.
- **Smile**—It's very important to have a smile on your face, because it shows confidence.
- **Posture**—Keep your back straight, shoulders back, chest out, and feet apart. This posture shows that you are confident and know what you are doing. *Don't lean in during conversation;* it gives the impression that you're too eager to listen. Sit back and relax. Raise your voice instead of leaning forward.

Body language is particularly important because of how you are perceived. It is the unspoken message being expressed. Too many people focus on what they say and not what they do. If you follow these tips, you can make sure you aren't sending the wrong message.



*Communication
is the real work
of leadership.*

—Nitin Nohria

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as the spoken word.*

Verbal Communication

Speaking

First impressions can be powerful. How you hold yourself and how you are dressed contribute to your first impression. And so does the way in which you speak. Poor grammar, profanity, derogatory comments or gossip can make a first impression go from good to bad very quickly. Influence is difficult (if nearly impossible) when individuals have a negative impression of you.

So how do you make a solid first impression? Dressing appropriately, maintaining good posture, making eye contact, and smiling occasionally are factors that contribute to a favorable first impression. Perhaps even more important is how you speak and what you say about others. Never use profanity, avoid gossip, and try and keep derogatory comments to yourself when meeting individuals for the first time. Paying special attention and using the right grammar when you speak is significant because it tells people that you are prepared and working hard to make a good first impression. Try to make sure what you are saying is useful and succinct—and avoid rambling on unnecessarily. It's often during these rambles that individuals find themselves in trouble.

Listening

Body language and speaking are two very important ways to communicate with people, and you also communicate through listening. Listening effectively may be one of the most overlooked topics within communication, but listening is essential to getting one's point across.

A good listener:

- Works at listening
- Helps the speaker convey thoughts
- Listens to understand, not to disprove

Think of all of times you have listened today. Which of these aspects did you actively practice? Which could you have improved on?

Active listening is defined as actively trying to understand what the other person is trying to communicate to you. There are four parts to listening. To help with understanding, ask yourself each question as you listen:

- **Hearing**—the physical process of taking in sound
 - » How do I decrease distractions interfering with my concentration on the person?
- **Interpreting**—the process of finding meaning in what is being communicated
 - » What point is the person trying to make?
- **Evaluating**—the process of judging or determining the significance of what's being said
 - » Is the speaker expressing an opinion or is he or she discussing unbiased facts? What can I learn from what the speaker is saying?
- **Responding**—the act of replying or answering back.
 - » Do I understand the ideas necessary to make a supportive response?

Summary

Communication has many important aspects. Today we have focused on non-verbal communication, speaking and active listening. To be sure you put your best foot forward, review each of these aspects. These tips will help you to be the best communicator you can be by creating the right impression.

References

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