

# Body language

— the unspoken perspective



by KY JOSEPH

**B**ody language plays a huge part in one's pursuit to create an illustrious personal brand, yet it's that one tool that so many of us seem to overlook in our pursuit to impress others.

In business, it's as much about how you portray yourself when communicating as it is about the message you are trying to relay. Body language is most certainly a communication device that does convey a message, and it plays a significant role in first impressions.

What's more, because words are not actually spoken, the message you are silently delivering can be interpreted in many ways, leaving it up to the receiver to decipher and perceive as they so chose. Just think about how dangerous it would be if an entire business meeting was conducted using body language alone. I bet you'd make a real conscious effort to ensure yours was perfectly controlled to ensure as positive an impact as possible.

You need to imagine every meeting without verbal dialogue and practice your body language until your unspoken communication is as fluid as your spoken.

So what factors play a role in body language?

Well, a combination of several, including facial expressions, eye contact, mannerisms, posture and body movement. It's a fact that people react favourably based

on the "feeling" they get from someone, so it's essential to positively influence those senses to improve your chances of success.

On that note, it's also paramount to respect one's personal space. There's nothing worse than having someone infringe upon your personal space, or "bubble" as we often call it. It's uncomfortable, disrespectful and a bad gauge of someone's comfort zone.

Something as common as a handshake, for instance, can provide clues about one's personality. Aggressive people have firm handshakes while people with low self-esteem often have a limp handshake. Domineering men often squeeze the hand of women during a greeting, and interestingly, clever women move their index and baby finger in toward their palm, preventing a crushing handshake. This is proven to negate the dominant act while keeping her in equal control.

You have to remember that by the time people end up in high-ranking positions, they have pretty much honed their skills for "reading people" in the first 10 seconds. And in those 10 seconds they can ? and will ? form an opinion or impression of you that will most likely last the test of time. Psychologists claim that 45% of our verbal skills impact one's impression while body language accounts for 55% of that measurement. In summary, how your body says something is just as, if not more than, important as what you are actually saying.

Want to practice your body language? Look in the mirror or videotape yourself and watch how you appear when speaking on the phone or talking with someone else. Try and almost rehearse how you want to look at all times.

Too many people fail to recognize and use body language, and yet it's one of the most important tools that you actually have control over in your personal branding arsenal. Make sure you are armed and ready to win each battle by sending out the right signals.

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