



CHAPTER 3

Nonverbal Communication and Teamwork

3.1 *Nonverbal Communication*

3.2 *Listening Skills*

3.3 *Teamwork*

Nonverbal Communication on the Job

Miguel works as a supervisor at a hair salon, Maria's Boutique. He plans to evaluate two relatively new employees tomorrow.

The first employee, Carrie, is from the United States. English is her first language, and she understands it well. Sometimes Carrie does not get to work on time. However, the only time she misses work is when she is sick. Her uniforms are usually a little wrinkled, her shoes are unpolished, and she likes to wear long earrings that jingle. She is quiet and does not talk much with the customers while she works. The quality of most of her work is acceptable. However, sometimes she is a bit careless when using hair dyes because she has not listened or did not understand instructions. She is not very friendly with her coworkers and does not socialize much. She does not seem to care very much about her job.

The other employee, Chi, is from Myanmar. Chi has been in this country for about one year. She speaks English but not well. When she is given instructions on the usage of hair dyes and supplies, she listens intently, smiles, and nods her head "yes." However, many times she does not understand. As a result, she often needs help in learning how to use the chemicals and supplies correctly. Otherwise, Chi's work is very good. Her uniforms are somewhat worn but always clean and tidy. Unlike Carrie, Chi is very friendly. However, she is limited in her ability to socialize and develop friendships with coworkers because of her English skills. Coworkers seem to like her and enjoy her enthusiasm for life in the United States.

Questions

1. How important are listening skills to helping Carrie and Chi complete work successfully?
2. How important is nonverbal language to helping Carrie and Chi communicate?
3. Which employee seems to be a better teammate, Carrie or Chi? Why?

3.1

Nonverbal Communication

OBJECTIVES

After completing Section 3.1, you should be able to:

1. Describe the roles of nonverbal communication.
2. Indicate the nonverbal symbols sent in written messages.
3. List nonverbal symbols sent in spoken messages.
4. Identify nonverbal symbols that affect a person's image.

Key Point

Nonverbal symbols may reinforce, contradict, regulate, or substitute for verbal symbols.

The Roles of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is composed of the messages sent without or in addition to words. These messages have a strong impact on receivers. Often, actions speak so loudly that they drown out spoken words. This action happens because people use nonverbal symbols as a means to determine what the sender really thinks or feels. Nonverbal symbols can also indicate the degree of importance the sender attaches to a message.

Spoken or written symbols make up the verbal part of a message and are accompanied by nonverbal symbols. However, a nonverbal message may not have a verbal counterpart. Nonverbal symbols—body language, appearance, touch, space, time, voice—exist in written and oral communication and in the environment.

Receivers interpret nonverbal symbols by using their senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. If you hear a person say, "Great!" and see the person smile while looking at a letter, you will conclude that the letter contains good news. If you hear a frowning person say, "Great!" in a disgusted tone when looking at a letter, you will probably conclude that the letter contains disappointing news. The receiver interprets the message based on sight (seeing the smile or frown) and hearing (the tone of voice).

People's opinions are often based on the nonverbal symbols they see and how they interpret them. Verbal and nonverbal symbols should be interpreted in relation to each other. Nonverbal symbols may reinforce, contradict, or substitute for verbal symbols. They may also regulate the verbal part of a message.

Reinforcing a Verbal Message

Nonverbal symbols usually reinforce the verbal message. Pointing to a door as you state, "The office is the second door on the left" reinforces the verbal message. Pounding the table while making a statement also reinforces a verbal message.

Figure 3-1 Nonverbal symbols affect spoken messages.

NONVERBAL SYMBOLS	
Body language	Facial expressions, gestures, and posture
Touching	Shaking hands, back slapping, placing a hand on someone's shoulder, and hugging
Space	The physical distance between individuals
Time	Being punctual for appointments or completing tasks by the date requested
Paralanguage	Qualities of voice (such as pitch and volume), rate of speech, and actions (such as laughing or sighing)

Eyes provide revealing facial expressions and often are called "the windows of the soul." Eyes reveal feelings, such as excitement, boredom, and concentration. Eyebrows also send various messages. Raised eyebrows may mean nervousness, surprise, or questioning. Pinched together they may imply confusion or indecision.

Direct eye contact conveys interest, friendship, or confidence. A lack of eye contact may mean disinterest or boredom. In business, the amount of eye contact varies depending on a person's status. Because subordinates want to tell their supervisors that they like them, they generally make more eye contact.

A **gesture** is the use of your arms and hands to express an idea or feeling. Crossed arms may indicate concentration or withdrawal. A hand placed against the side of the head can imply forgetfulness. Trembling or fidgeting hands sometimes indicate nervousness.

Leaning toward a person who is speaking conveys an open attitude. Nodding confirms listening and sometimes agreement. However, folding your arms or shaking your head from side to side indicates a closed attitude or disagreement.

People use gestures to determine the real meaning in a message. No matter what words you may use, your eyes and your face reveal what your true feelings are. When people attempt to use gestures to deceive or hide the truth, they will undermine the message.

Touching

A handshake is the most acceptable form of touching for both men and women in the American business environment. It is a gesture used to greet someone and to close a discussion. A person who gives a firm handshake and makes eye contact projects a cordial, confident image. However, a weak, soft

Diversity

Facial expressions and gestures are very culturally oriented. For example, an Asian generally greets one with a bow of the head; the American offers to shake your hand.

Ethics

Sexual harassment is an ethical issue because it infringes on personal freedom and can have a demeaning or demoralizing effect on the victim.

handshake suggests listlessness or mental dullness. A cold, wet handshake may indicate nervousness and possibly a feeling of inferiority.

Other forms of touching, such as hugging or backslapping, are generally not acceptable in business. A person of higher rank, however, may put his or her hand on a subordinate's shoulder as a sign of encouragement or support. A coworker could do the same thing with another coworker. A coworker should not put his or her hand on the shoulder of the supervisor. Such action could be considered too familiar. Everyone should avoid touching that could be interpreted as condescending or as sexual harassment.

Personal Space

One aspect of personal space is the physical distance between individuals. In general, people stand relatively close to people they like. People tend to leave more space between themselves and people they fear or do not like. When unable to arrange space comfortably, as in a crowded elevator, people adjust by using other nonverbal symbols, such as avoiding eye contact. They may stare at the passing floor numbers or remain silent. People avoid speaking or making eye contact in these situations because their territory, or their own space zone, is being violated. The size of this space depends on the activity and the relationships with the other persons involved. Typical space zones for North Americans are shown in Figure 3-2.

The social zone is common for most business meetings or social gatherings. When people converse in their social zone, they have some reason for speaking. If a stranger enters a social zone, people usually break eye contact or turn away. For example, if you notice a stranger as you walk on the sidewalk, you watch the stranger from a distance of about 20 feet. As the stranger approaches, however, you break eye contact. If you speak to a stranger who is within your social zone, you use a formal, businesslike voice.

Key Point

A comfortable personal space zone for talking with colleagues is 18 inches to 4 feet.

Figure 3-2 Use of personal space sends a nonverbal message.

NONVERBAL SYMBOLS	
Intimate Zone 0 to 18 inches	Comfort zone for talking with close friends or relatives
Personal Zone 18 inches to 4 feet	Comfort zone for talking privately with colleagues and acquaintances
Social Zone 4 to 12 feet	Comfort zone for talking with others at most business meetings or social gatherings
Public Zone 12 feet or more	Comfort zone between a speaker and an audience at a meeting or presentation

Communication between a speaker and an audience is within the public zone. From a distance of more than 12 feet, people may look at each other, but they do not maintain eye contact. Interaction is avoided.

When a coworker stands too close or too far from you, he or she probably thinks your relationship is on a different level than you do. You may think the relationship is on a personal level, but he or she thinks it is on a social level. Consistently standing too close to a coworker could be interpreted as sexual harassment.

In an office setting, the size, location (corner office, distance from the top manager's office, and so forth), and use of space may be a sign of a person's status. Generally, the more spacious a person's office is, the higher the person's status is.

Time

The use of time is another aspect of nonverbal communication. Suppose someone asks you to do a task as soon as possible. If you complete the action right away, you send a positive message to the other person. Ignoring an urgent request can send a negative message.

In American culture, promptness is considered important. Being on time for a meeting shows your respect for others. In some other cultures, arriving several minutes after a stated time may be considered appropriate.

Paralanguage

Maybe you have heard the saying, "It's not what you say, but how you say it that counts." **Paralanguage** is the nonverbal symbols that accompany a verbal message and reveal the difference between what is said and how it is said. Paralanguage includes pitch, stress, rate, volume, inflection, rhythm, and pronunciation. It also includes laughing, crying, sighing, grunting, yawning, and coughing. Even silence, pauses, and hesitations are part of paralanguage. Paralanguage is critical to the correct interpretation of a message.

Key Point

Paralanguage involves how a message is said rather than the words spoken.

check point 2

1. What are some examples of nonverbal symbols sent in written messages?
2. What are some nonverbal symbols sent in spoken messages?
3. When judging attitudes, do people give more importance to how words are spoken or to the words themselves?

Check your answers in Appendix C.

Too Little Self-Confidence

Having too little self-confidence can also hinder communication and hurt your image. If people think you do not believe in yourself, they will question why they should believe in you. Being too nervous in a normal situation shows low self-confidence. This nervousness is reflected by a quivering voice, shaking hands, perspiration, or the inability to think or respond clearly. When people think you are not confident about your message, they will be less likely to believe you.

Negative thinking and unrealistic expectations are two causes of a lack of confidence. Remember that everyone makes mistakes—forgetting details, overlooking things, and so forth. However, people need to feel positive about themselves. No matter who you are, you can make a contribution. Identify your strengths and build on them. Identify your weaknesses and make a plan to improve on them.

Friendliness

Friendliness is an important aspect of an effective image. **Friendliness** is defined as being supportive, helpful, or kind. When you are cordial, pleasant, or kind to others, they are more likely to respond to you in a positive way. This positive response may make communication easier.

To be perceived as friendly often means that you must focus on the needs of others rather than on your own needs. You send nonverbal messages that say “friend” when you smile, when you have a relaxed approach, and when you desire honest, open feedback.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is an aspect of image that can set you apart from others.

Enthusiasm means showing excitement or a lively interest. Real enthusiasm is contagious. When you enthusiastically present your ideas, receivers will sense your enthusiasm and feel positive about those ideas and you. When you are truly excited about an idea and eagerly present it, your feelings spread quickly to others. Smiles, raised eyebrows, and eyes that are wide open and sparkle are nonverbal symbols that show enthusiasm.

Sincerity

Sincerity means being open and genuine or earnest. Being seen as sincere helps you build a positive image. For you to be credible, you must be perceived as sincere—which may take time. Open, honest communication sends a nonverbal message that you are sincere. In order to think that you are sincere, receivers need time to observe you. If your actions and words contrast with one another, you will be viewed as insincere. If they match, you will be considered credible and sincere.



Ethics

Do you know someone who is phony or insincere? How do you feel about that person? Many unethical people are judged so because they are seen as phony or insincere.

Section 3.1 *Applications*



A. Analyze Speaking Behavior

Robert spoke to his coworker, Sherry, this morning. "Good morning, Sherry," Robert said in a quiet voice as he slouched by Sherry's desk. "I think I can complete the reports you requested by Thursday," he added as he looked down at her with a frowning face. "I will appreciate it if you can get the data to me by this afternoon," Robert said with a sigh as he walked away.

1. What nonverbal symbols were part of Robert's communication with Sherry?
2. Do Robert's nonverbal symbols indicate that he is pleased to prepare the reports Sherry requested? Explain your answer.
3. Rewrite the conversation. Change the nonverbal symbols to alter the meaning of Robert's message to show that he is pleased to help with the reports.

B. Identify Nonverbal Symbols in Written Messages

The appearance and correctness of a written document send nonverbal messages to the reader. Writers should consider the appearance of documents as well as the content before sending them to others.

1. Open and print the *Word* file *CH03 Letter* from the student data files.
2. Do you think this document will make a favorable impression on readers? Why or why not?
3. What nonverbal symbols does this document contain?



C. Identify Nonverbal Symbols in the Environment

Aspects of a physical setting can send nonverbal messages. Furniture, the level of lighting, temperature, sound, and the use of color can affect people in the setting.

1. Identify a public setting that you will use for this activity, such as your school cafeteria or a fast-food restaurant.
2. List all the nonverbal symbols you can identify in the setting. Consider furniture, lighting, temperature, sound (music or noise), and colors. Tell how you think each symbol affects people in this setting.