

# SECTION F

## BODY LANGUAGE

### *Content*

<b>F. 1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>F. 2</b>	<b>You And Your Customer .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>F. 3</b>	<b>The First Four Minutes .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>F. 4</b>	<b>Positive Communication.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>F. 5</b>	<b>The Five Steps To Understanding .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>F. 6</b>	<b>Body Language Is The Art Of Seeing What Others Are Thinking.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>F. 7</b>	<b>Basic Body Language Observations.....</b>	<b>11</b>



Toddlers impart amazing body language!

## F. 1 INTRODUCTION

Having a detailed marketing plan for various events during the year is vital to the development of your nicenstripy business . . . as they will encourage potential customers to contact you.

You have achieved your first objective in increasing the number of people to telephone you . . . BUT you have still to make the sale!

We have emphasised, so far, the importance of planning and implementing your campaigns.

Just as important however is how you assist your customer to make a purchase from you.

The best marketing plans and advertising campaigns in the world are useless without the next vital part: -

***“HOW WE  
COMMUNICATE  
WITH OUR  
CUSTOMER  
FACE TO FACE”***

## F. 2 YOU AND YOUR CUSTOMER

### F. 2.1 HOW DO OTHERS SEE YOU?

The impression you make and your appearance are vitally important when first greeting a customer.

**YOU DON'T GET A  
*SECOND* CHANCE  
TO MAKE A *GOOD*  
*FIRST* IMPRESSION**

A leading industrialist who had hired many people during a long career, recently admitted: -

“Yes, I have hired a lot of people over the years. Of course, I have also interviewed many people to whom I didn't offer a job

Sometimes this was simply because they were not suited to the total job requirements. Other times however, it was because something seemed wrong from the word go.

Often the job would require the person to interact with our customers - I realised that if something seemed wrong to me, it would probably seem wrong to our customers.”

# Issue Number 000

“I have therefore analysed the reasons for something seeming wrong”.

They were one, or more, of the following: -

- ☹ A weak handshake
- ☹ Lack of eye contact, especially during the greeting
- ☹ Not smiling
- ☹ Lack of enthusiasm during the greeting
- ☹ Crumpled clothes
- ☹ Food stains on clothes
- ☹ Greasy untidy hair
- ☹ Walking in smoking
- ☹ Dirty fingernails
- ☹ Dirty scuffed shoes"



## F. 3 THE FIRST FOUR MINUTES

The first four minutes, at job interview, of a speech or meeting somebody for the first time, are vital: judgements are being made - positively or negatively. To achieve longer-term results, you have initially to win time for yourself by your appearance and your body language. This is especially true when meeting people for the first time. They certainly do not immediately know of the finer inner qualities you possess.

**"YOUR OWN  
OUTWARD APPEARANCE  
NEEDS TO BE  
*A WINNING ONE*"**

Many of the qualities and attitudes we have talked about are internal. You know about your inner qualities, but what about other people - how do you come across to them? If you look good, you tend to feel good and people respond more positively to people who feel good about themselves.

Even if you feel a bit 'down' make an effort. Otherwise, others will feel your mood. They will respond badly to you and you will feel worse.

## F. 4 POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

When we communicate we do so with words, tone of voice and body language.

Social scientists have verified that 60% of the message transmitted during face-to-face communication is non-verbal, that is Body Language.

Studies have shown that: -

- ◆ words can convey only about 15% of the message
- ◆ tone of voice 25%
- ◆ body language 60%

It is fairly common knowledge that people subconsciously read body signals. We perceive others as being friendly or unfriendly, often before a word is spoken.

The comment that . . . “the boss is a good guy when you get to know him” . . . is indicative of this non-verbal perception and a sad commentary on how non-awareness of the importance of body language limits the managerial potential of an executive.

As we gain awareness of non-verbal behaviour and attempt to interpret the body language of others, so we become inwardly conscious of our own body gestures. This results in more effective communication both ways.

In the study of body language, it is important **not** to make interpretations from single unrelated gestures, which could be and often are, misleading. Each gesture is akin to a word in language.

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An isolated word is often meaningless. It is only after a series of words are placed together in a sentence that a message becomes clear.

Similarly with Body Language only after a number of gestures are put together can we understand the message being sent.

Body gestures rely to a great degree on subconscious empathy or subconscious emotions, while the spoken word usually follows a carefully planned thought process.

This is why body language often belies the spoken word.

Indeed, for those who can correctly interpret body language, a non-verbal cluster of gestures will often be far more accurate than the spoken word.



## F. 5 THE FIVE STEPS TO UNDERSTANDING

Being aware of body language and observing it in action is fairly simple. Interpretation is somewhat more complex and takes careful study and analysis to gain accuracy.

To better understand body language, follow the five steps listed below: -

- i) Keep an open mind
- ii) Observe your own posture and gestures when you are in different moods and ask yourself these questions: -
  - a) What is my body language saying?
  - b) Where are my hands?
  - c) Am I leaning forward or back?
  - d) Are my legs crossed?
  - e) Is my chin up?
  - f) Is my head to one side?
  - g) Are my hands clenched?
  - h) What am I feeling?

# Issue Number 000

- iii) Observe the body language of others. Initially simply note that the other person is moving . . . constantly. These movements, combined, indicate thought and emotion. As you develop a dictionary of body language signals you will learn to read their meaning.
- iv) Learn to put the message you are receiving from the signals together with the spoken word and draw your conclusions of what is *really* meant.
- v) **Learn to control your own Body Language** so that you send to others only those signals that you wish to send.

You should treat Body language as a new foreign language like Russian, which means nothing to most of us either in the written or spoken word to begin with, but can be understood with practice.



## **F. 6 BODY LANGUAGE IS THE ART OF SEEING WHAT OTHERS ARE THINKING**

Be careful, however, when you start observing others, that you **truly** understand what is being said. Do not make judgements initially . . . just observe.

Understanding Body Language is a real skill and takes time and practice to truly master. Unlike studying for a degree in mathematics, however, you can practice it every single day of your life because: -

### **BODY LANGUAGE IS A '*TRAIT*' OF HUMAN NATURE**

Mastering Body Language can become one of the greatest skills you will ever learn . . . both in business and socially!

To start you off, on the next few pages we give you some characteristics and their possible meanings.

By no means is our list totally comprehensive nor is it the full and complete answer to all body movements. It is meant purely as a guide to help and assist you and make you more aware of your own gestures.

## **F. 7 BASIC BODY LANGUAGE OBSERVATIONS**

### **F. 7.1 FACE AND EYES**

We have little control over our eyes and these will give clues to our state of mind.

In the workplace we can use these clues to help us work out how everyone is getting along with each other and when visiting a potential customer whether they are likely to buy or not. Also your body language shows whether you are really interested in the customer.

The amount of eye contact you have with someone needs to be appropriate - if it isn't, we talk about someone with 'shifty eyes' or a 'fixed gaze'. It is only when we see 'eye to eye' that we have a basis for communication.

If someone stares intently at us or deliberately turns away from looking at us, this produces strong feelings, either because of intimacy, or lack of it, that the gesture creates.

A straight stare can show feelings that are loving, hostile or frightened; looking away can show inferiority, shyness or casual superiority.

An easy way for a boss to make a subordinate feel worthless is for him to look out of the window while reprimanding or counselling his member of staff.

This complete lack of intimacy will reinforce the subordinate's lack of self-worth or antagonise him into a continuation of the undesirable behaviour so that he will really make the boss sit up and notice him.

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The same applies when dealing with your customer!

The eyes are probably the biggest 'give away' of all body gestures.

Whenever speaking with somebody look him or her in the eye, as this gives your customer confidence that what you are saying is true. Whenever people look away from you they are either thinking (in the past or forward), lying or simply lack self-confidence.

Together with other gestures however you should be able to ascertain which!



## F. 7.2 HANDS

Both palms held out facing your customer indicates that you are being open and honest with them and it encourages others to be open with you.



So, if you are trying to get your customer to tell you about a problem, show them your open palm or use an open posture towards them. This shows that you are not putting the pressure on but would like the other person to be honest with you.

If someone is clutching their hands, this can indicate that they are frustrated and are holding something back.

Different 'hand to head' gestures can indicate boredom. If the finger tapping against the cheek accompanies it, drumming on the counter or table, or with a hand or hands on hips, this is a sign of impatience.

You must get this person involved or they will switch off completely.

One way to involve them is to hand something to the person so that they have to change their posture.

# Issue Number 000

Hands clasped behind the head, this individual is invariably in total control and may even have a hidden advantage. It is, however, an unfortunate non-verbal trait of many senior executives as it suggests to junior staff that their superior is “talking down” to them.



## F. 7.3 ARM OR LEG BARRIERS

When we were children and felt threatened or frightened, we would hide behind something.

As adults, we 'hide' behind our crossed arms and legs as if we were putting up a barrier.



If you are talking to someone and the person crosses their arms, they are probably showing non-verbally that they disagree with you or do not like what you are saying.

You need to try to get them into a more receptive posture, by asking them questions or handing them something so they have to take it for example, a product brochure.

Lean forward and say something like: -

"I can see you have a question, how can I help?"

or

"What do you think?"

If you can see the negative thought or decision before they speak, you can often alter your course of action to get more on the other person's wavelength, to maximise the chance of a successful outcome.

## F. 7.4 POSTURAL ECHO

With our posture we show inattention, interest, emotion, or even the status we give to someone.

In silent films of people entering the offices of other managers, it was very clear who was the boss. Our regard, or lack of it, for others is often very obvious to see.

When people have a good rapport with each other, however, you will see that they unconsciously adopt similar body gestures.

This is known as a '*postural echo*'.

If you see your customer take up a posture that reflects your own, that is an indication that they are feeling at ease and are in a buying mood.

If you mirror how your customer is standing, this will help them feel more comfortable and encourage them to buy. Better still is to adopt a postural echo whilst sitting, particularly just before a closing question.

In meetings, one can often see people taking up postural echoes to indicate with whom they are aligning. You can sometimes see someone changing sides by a change in posture before they actually say anything.

## F. 7.5 CHIN STROKING

One of the most common and easier recognised Body Language gestures. It indicates thought.



It is important not to only notice the stroking of the chin but at what point it stops and what other actions commence.

## F. 7.6 FINGER TO EAR LOBE

A momentary gesture with the index finger beside or behind the ear indicates subconscious refusal to accept something that is being pointed out.



## F. 7.7 HANDSHAKING

It is possible to create a psychological advantage by being first in offering a hand.

Conversely, refusing or ignoring a handshake also can establish a psychological advantage.



Always give a firm handshake . . . nothing is worse than clasping a limp lettuce leaf!



## F. 7.8 HEAD GESTURES

### i) **DOWN**

When the head is down on the chest, it is normally a sign of defensiveness. Look at your dog next time you tell him/her off or your toddler who knows she/he has done wrong.

### ii) **UP**

When the head comes up interest is beginning to take shape in the customer's mind. He is becoming receptive.

### iii) **INCLINED TO ONE SIDE**

This is the best method of recognising willingness and co-operation. Perfect in a selling situation.

## F. 7.9 OUR PERSONAL TERRITORY

We each have a subconscious ring around us of 18 inches.

Therefore you will observe that unless forced by a crowd most people speak approximately 3 feet apart in formal situations.



Friends will 'drift' in and out of the three feet rule and good friends often will speak eighteen inches or less apart.

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When selling do not break into your customer's personal territory as it will make them (particularly the opposite sex) uncomfortable . . . the result being they will not hear what you say as they are focused on your proximity to them.

However when you feel the time is right, start to move in and back out again and eventually you could be actually rubbing shoulders . . . that is when you can *close the sale!*

There are of course hundreds of gestures that together paint the picture of what somebody is really saying and we cannot expect to make you fully conversant with them all in this section of the manual.

What we do hope is that you are now aware of the importance of body language and that you study it and use it to your advantage.

## F. 7.10 SMILE EYE CONTACT

The most immediate impact you can create from your own body language is by: -

- ◆ **Your Smile**
- ◆ **Your Eye Contact**



Do more of both when you meet and interact with people. They cost absolutely nothing, take no time, and yet there are hardly better ways to secure a positive relationship.

## F. 7.11 CONCLUSION

An understanding of body language can give valuable clues to help us get along with each other. When dealing with your customers and your staff use your knowledge of body language to try and work out how they are feeling so that you can respond appropriately.

*But remember, don't look at the clues in isolation, they must be seen as part of a pattern before we can make reliable judgements.*

More importantly try to control your own body language before you even attempt to analyse somebody else's. We have only touched the surface here.

To become an expert in body language, people attend university for three years and then have to practice for several more before they even achieve the most average of qualifications.

The more you are aware of your own body language, however, the less you may give away when in a selling situation. If so, you may well develop stronger relationships and build more sales!