

Effective Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

LEARNING GOALS

1. Define the elements of effective verbal communication.
2. Demonstrate effective verbal communication.
3. Identify nonverbal communication gestures.
4. Demonstrate effective nonverbal communication.

Communication today involves a variety of forms. Much communication is through electronic methods such as email and voice systems. Your first contact when calling a business is often an automated voice system in which you are given multiple directions. For example, if you call the telephone company about a billing question, you may receive this type of message:

Welcome to XYZ Phone Company. For English, press 1. (You also hear directions at this point for someone speaking Spanish.) For all billing questions, press 1. For new service or change of address, press 2. To report a problem with your phone service, press 3. To repeat the menu options, press 9.

If you call an airline company, you may hear a message similar to this one:

Thank you for calling XYZ Airlines. This call may be monitored or recorded to ensure that you receive quality service. For automated arrival or departure information, press 1. For travel using frequent flyer miles, press 2. For travel to and from Canada or in the United States, press 3. For travel anywhere else in the world, press 4.

Although these systems help organizations handle large volumes of calls efficiently, they can be difficult to navigate. By the time you get a live person to help you with your problem, you may be so frustrated that you respond to the person in a negative manner. Additionally, email communication has increased so dramatically that you may communicate for months or even years with individuals you have never seen or spoken with by telephone.

What does this increase in electronic communication mean for your verbal and nonverbal communication skills? Simply stated, by engaging in so much electronic communication, you have fewer opportunities to practice your verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Also, it is much easier to be abusive to a person over the phone or in an email

than in person. Yet as an administrative professional, you must develop effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills. You will often deal with a person on the telephone who is frustrated with or angry about an automated voice system and proceeds to take out his or her frustration on you. Additionally, you will use your verbal and nonverbal communication skills daily as you represent your employer, your organization, and yourself to the internal and external public.

Developing verbal and nonverbal communication skills is an ongoing process. No matter how long you have been a student of communication, you can continue to learn more about becoming an effective communicator. As you study this chapter, commit to continually improving and expanding your skills.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the process of exchanging ideas and feelings through the use of words. Initially, the concept of verbal communication seems simple. Everyone understands words and knows what they mean. In actuality, verbal communication is not simple at all. Words, though they may be spelled the same, have different meanings for different people. Add to this situation the complexity of a diverse workforce, and communication can become even more complex. This section offers several techniques to help you become a more effective verbal communicator.

Listen and Understand

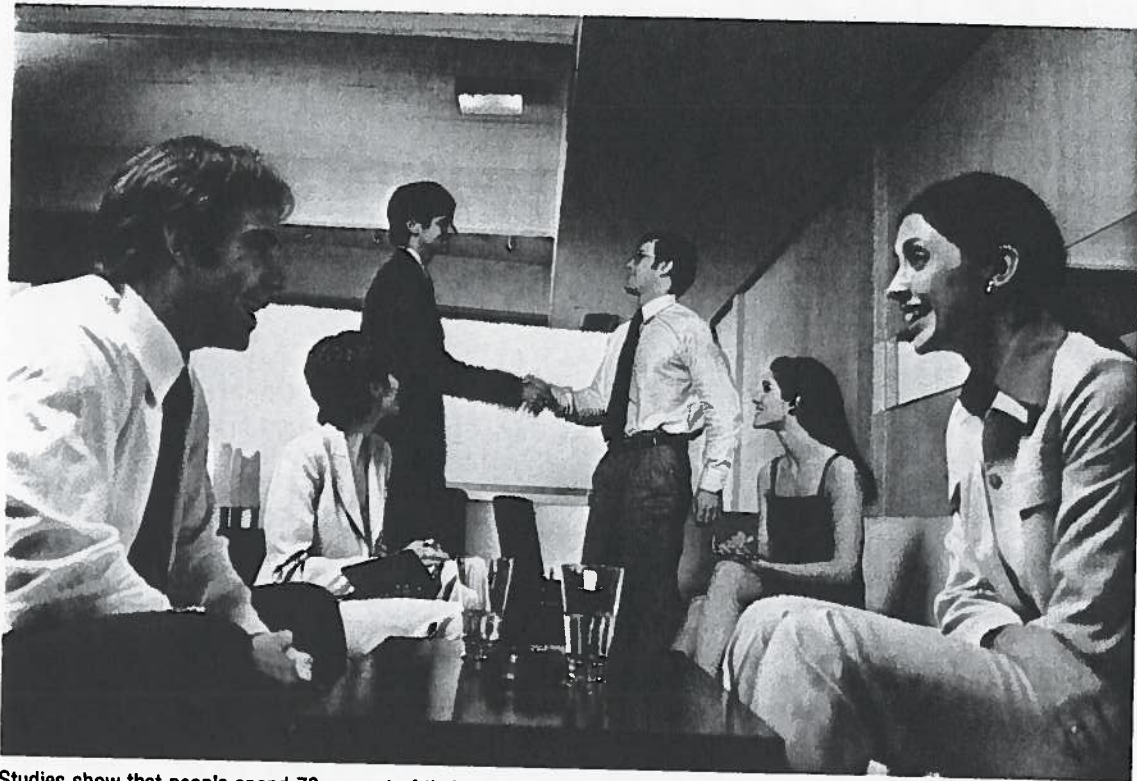
Communication is defined in the dictionary as "the ability to make known; to impart; to transmit information, thought, or feeling so that it is adequately received and understood." The first step in effective verbal communication is to *listen*. Have you ever been involved in a situation in which someone did not hear what you said and became angry with you due to what

the person *thought* you said? You can probably answer this question in the affirmative. People do not listen as well as they should; thus, they often do not understand the communicator's verbal message or intent.

Listen Actively

Studies show that most people spend 70 percent of their time communicating. Of that 70 percent, 45 percent is spent listening. However, most authorities agree that listening is the weakest factor in the communication process. Hearing does not constitute listening. A person can hear the words and yet not understand them. **Listening actively** requires that you listen for the meaning as well as the words of the speaker. These techniques will help as you attempt to improve your active listening skills.

- Prepare to listen. Drive distracting thoughts from your mind, and direct your full attention to the speaker.
- Listen for facts. Mentally register the key words the speaker is using, and repeat key ideas or related points. Relate what the speaker is saying to your experiences.
- Do not let your mind wander. Most people speak at approximately 135–175 words a minute, although the brain can process information at about 500 words a minute. Listening allows plenty of time for the mind to wander. Unless you are committed to hearing the speaker, your mind will wander.
- Listen for feelings. Search beneath the surface. Listen to what is and is not being said. Additional suggestions for listening for feelings are included in Figure 5-1.
- Minimize mental blocks and filters by being aware of them. Know your biases and prejudices. Do not let them keep you from hearing what the speaker is saying.
- Question and paraphrase. Ask questions when you do not understand what you have heard. Paraphrase by putting the speaker's communication in your own words and asking the speaker if you have understood correctly.



DIGITAL VISION

Studies show that people spend 70 percent of their time communicating.

- Summarize. Clarify the discussion by summarizing it. Effective statements to help clarify a situation include:

It is my understanding that the major points expressed are

The key ideas that have been expressed are

In summary, we have agreed to

By summarizing, you set the framework for examining what has been said. Individuals can then either agree with your summary or point out areas that are incorrect according to their understanding so the group agrees and closure occurs.

Understand the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Communication

Self-esteem is defined as "the way people feel about themselves." Self-esteem and

DEAL WITH FEELINGS

- Take time in group situations to talk about how people are communicating.
- Listen at all levels—content, process, and emotion.
- Realize that understanding does not mean agreement.
- Praise in public; reprimand in private.
- Honor the other person's differences before you state your point of view.
- Deal with conflict by getting it out in the open. If conflict is not dealt with, it does not disappear. It may express itself in negative ways.
- If you are working in teams, set ground rules that state how issues will be handled.
- Recognize people when they say or do something you appreciate.

FIGURE 5-1 Deal with Feelings

communication are **intrinsically linked** (being an inevitable part of each other and incapable of being separated). Your self-esteem affects the way you communicate, and your communication is affected by your self-esteem. Everyone begins developing self-esteem or lack of it at a young age. People form opinions of their worth or lack of worth through experiences and feedback they receive from significant others in their lives, such as parents, siblings, friends, and peer groups.

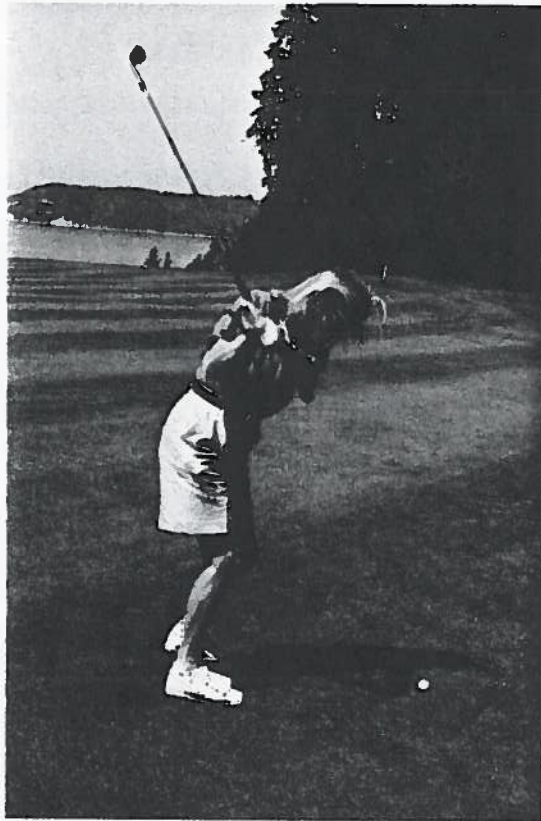
People with low self-esteem are more likely to focus on their failures than their successes. When asked to express their thoughts (and they often have to be asked since they think they have nothing worthwhile to say), they start their answers with statements such as the following:

- *I'm probably wrong, but . . .*
- *I never was very good at doing this, but . . .*
- *You don't really want my opinion; I have never done well in that area.*

Examine Your Inference Ladder

You live in a world in which you take action based on your experiences, the data you observe, your assumptions, and the conclusions you draw from your experiences, observations, and assumptions. To help you understand how the inference ladder can cause communication problems, consider this situation:

Tom and Helena work in the marketing department of a large company located in California. Tom is a native of Michigan, and Helena is a native of Texas. They are discussing a marketing project for a client. Helena favors a bold design using several primary colors for the cover of the project; Tom favors an understated monochromatic design. They get into an argument, during which Tom comments in a nasty tone, "I might have known you would suggest such a cover; Texans always have to make a bold statement. When you're in Texas I'll bet you walk around in a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots." Helena is so furious that she walks away, but her thoughts are, Tom's an idiot. He has never been to Texas. Midwesterners are so boringly conservative.



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

I have never been good at golf; I know I am going to slice the ball.

What happened in this communication? Rather than having a positive discussion of what would work best for the client and the audience that receives the brochure, both individuals made assumptions about each other based on where they were born.

Notice Figure 5-2, which illustrates an inference ladder. People's actions and beliefs are influenced by their backgrounds and experiences. From their backgrounds and experiences, they select data and add meaning to the data through their cultural and personal experiences. They then make **assumptions** (something taken for granted or accepted as true without proof) based on the data and the meanings they add. They also draw conclusions, adopt beliefs, and take action. In other words, they draw **inferences** (conclusions

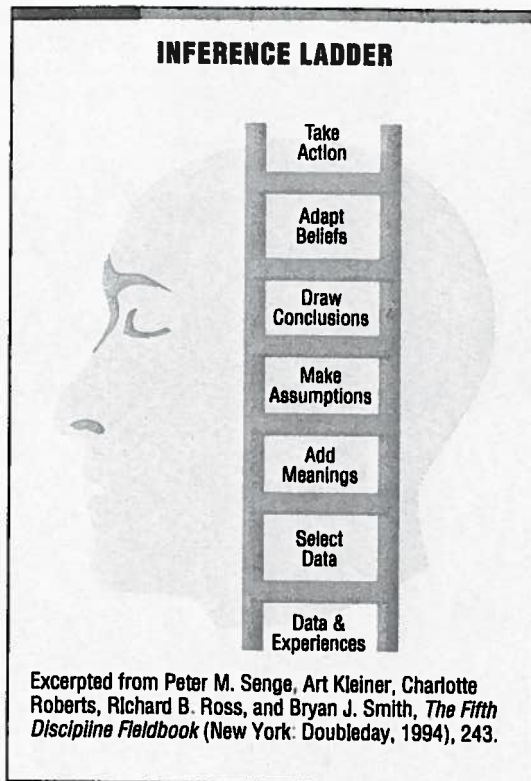


FIGURE 5-2 Inference Ladder

derived from premises known or assumed to be true) based on limited data and untested assumptions and take action on their beliefs, which may be fallacious. One of the problems with making assumptions is that people *believe* their assumptions are true. People do not take the time to question their assumptions. Not only do people believe their assumptions are true, but they act on their assumptions. When people make assumptions, those assumptions become their *truth*. People act on their assumptions and often end up creating a stressful situation for no reason.

In Tom and Helena's situation, is it possible to make correct assumptions based on someone's home state? Of course not. Is it possible to assume that all Texans or all Michiganders have similar characteristics? Obviously not. Can acting on these assumptions cause problems with individuals? Most

assuredly. Tom and Helena refuse to work together on the next marketing project. Helena tells her supervisor that Tom is too conservative—that he never has a creative idea—and she will not work with him. Tom tells his supervisor that Helena is not in touch with what California clients want, she only understands Texans. She is so certain she is right that it is impossible to work with her.

Cope with Criticism

It is not easy for anyone to hear criticism. However, no one can escape it. Not only will you be on the receiving end of criticism at times, but you may also find yourself criticizing others. When you are on the receiving end of criticism, engage in these behaviors:

- Listen! Hear the person making the criticism. Give the person time to make his or her critical comments without interrupting.
- Make no excuses for your behavior if you are in the wrong.
- If you do not understand why you are being criticized, ask for specific examples of what you have done wrong.
- Accept the criticism if it is valid. Be positive about your ability to change anything you



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

You always think you are right; unfortunately, you are wrong more than you are right.

have done wrong. Stress the positive—not the negative.

- If the person delivering the criticism is very agitated (perhaps screaming at you), you do not have to listen. Tell the person you will be happy to discuss the problem when he or she is calmer; then leave. You have the right to walk away from an out-of-control situation.
- End the dialogue on a positive note if possible. For example, you might tell the person that you appreciated hearing the comments.

Be Nonjudgmental

The tendency to judge other people often gets in the way of communication. When a person is speaking, you may spend your time judging the person rather than listening to what he or she is saying. That judgment can be as superficial as judging the way the person looks—hair style, dress, pronunciation of words, use of language—or more substantive in nature (but just as dangerous) by judging the person's beliefs and value system. Judgment comes from the listener's frame of reference and experience. If what is said is in agreement with the listener's experience, the listener tends to be positive. If what is said is not in agreement with the listener's experience, the judgment is negative.

In order to prevent or reduce the tendency to judge other people, you need to listen with understanding. You attempt to understand the other person's point of view and try to sense how the other person feels. If you have the courage to listen with understanding, communication improves greatly. You may even find that you have learned and grown in the process.

Willingly Accept Change

In a book entitled *Who Moved My Cheese?*¹ Johnson tells a story about change, with mice and little people as the protagonists, running a maze looking for cheese. Cheese is a

metaphor for what you want in life—whether it is a job, a relationship, money, health, recognition, freedom, or spiritual peace. The maze represents where you spend time looking for what you want; for example, your workplace may be the maze. In the story, the mice do better than the little people in dealing with change because they make the problem a simple one. When the cheese moves, the mice move on to other locations where they find more cheese. The little people tend to stay locked in the present situation even though the cheese is gone. The story told in Johnson's book encapsulates how many people handle change. They refuse to accept that change is happening and stay locked in their old, comfortable ways of responding to situations, even to their own physical and financial detriment.

In the fast-paced and changing world, you must accept and grow with change if you want to be a contributing member of an organization. Forward-thinking individuals are not fearful of change; they do not view change as bad. They look for the positives that occur because of change and decide how they can



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

When the cheese moves, take advantage of the change and find new cheese.

¹Spencer Johnson, *Who Moved My Cheese* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1998).

contribute to helping change occur. In fact, these people are often called **change agents** (individuals who facilitate change and help others accept change).

Speak and Be Understood

In addition to listening and attempting to understand what others are saying, good verbal communicators seek to speak so they are understood. This statement means that you:

- Concentrate on using language appropriately.
- Resolve conflict when it arises.
- De-escalate noise from the environment.

Use Language Appropriately

The language people use often prevents clear communication. Words in isolation have no meaning. They have meaning only because people have agreed on a particular meaning. You may say, "But what about the dictionary? Doesn't it contain the correct meaning of words?" Yes, it contains the correct meaning as agreed to by **etymologists** (specialists in the study of words). This meaning can be called the objective meaning of a word, and you use the dictionary to determine it. However, cultural differences impact the meaning certain words have for individuals. For example, even though Americans and the British speak the same language, they use words in different ways. In America, waiting in line at a theater for tickets is referred to as *standing in line*; in Britain, it is referred to as *queuing up*.

Meanings of words also change with time. New words come into existence, and other words become obsolete because of lack of use. The computer era has generated different applications for a number of words. For example, a *chat room* in computer terminology is not a room in the standard definition of the word in the dictionary, which is "an area separated by walls or partitions from other similar parts of the structure or building in which it is located." A chat room in computer terminology is a place in computer space where individuals from various locations (even

worldwide) come together to talk (share computer messages) through Web connections.

When speaking to be understood, you should engage in the following behaviors:

- Pay attention to the different meanings words can have.
- Clarify your meaning when necessary.
- Be sensitive to whether the individual or group is understanding what you are saying.
- **Paraphrase** (to restate the concept in different terms) when appropriate.

Resolve Conflict

In a perfect world, no conflicts exist. However, there is no such thing as a perfect world. Conflict, no matter how well-meaning individuals may be, can and does occur. What is important for you as an effective verbal communicator is to be able to solve conflicts.

People versus Problems. One of the first steps that needs to be taken when dealing with conflict is to separate the people from the problems. What does this mean? Consider this situation:

Nadia Booluis was appointed team leader of a group working on establishing a mentoring program for new administrative assistants at People Pharmaceuticals. Two team meetings have been held. The first meeting was an introductory session where individuals talked about what directions the project needed to take. For the second session, Nadia had requested that each person come prepared with objectives for the project. Of the eight team members, only two came to the meeting with something written down. A debate about the directions ensued, with two individuals (Jorge and Rebecca) verbally attacking each other. The meeting ended with no resolution about project direction. Several members walked away extremely upset with other team members. As team leader, Nadia must help the team separate the people from the problem.

You may have a difficult time finding your way through the jungle of people problems that often occur in situations and getting to

the problem to be addressed and the goals to be accomplished. One way to think about people problems is to separate them into three categories—perception, emotions, and communication.

Perceptions. The dictionary defines **perceive** as “to become aware of directly through any of the senses.” Although this definition seems straightforward, understanding someone’s perception is not. The way you see the world depends on your beliefs, experiences, and values. For example, one person may see a \$75,000 car and think, *How ridiculous! No one should pay that much for a car.* While another person sees the same car and thinks, *One of my goals in life is to be able to drive a car like that.* In attempting to understand another person’s perception of a situation, you should withhold judgment while you attempt to think from the person’s point of view. Attempting

to understand another person’s view is not the same as agreeing with it. You may never agree with the person. Attempting to understand allows you to consider another perspective, which may or may not modify some of your own perceptions. However, you are listening to a different point of view and giving yourself a chance to learn from it.

Emotions. When trying to solve an important problem, people’s feelings may be more important than what they are saying. You need to let the emotions surface. What are you feeling? What are other people feeling? At times, you may choose to write down how you are feeling and how you want to feel and ask the members of the group to do the same. As a result, all of you will have a better understanding of your feelings. Do not react to an emotional outburst with an outburst of your own.



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

Finding your way through the jungle of people problems that often occur can be difficult.

Communication. In communicating effectively, you can enlist the techniques presented earlier in this chapter, such as the following:

- Listening for facts
- Listening for feelings
- Minimizing mental blocks and filters by being aware of them
- Questioning and paraphrasing

Conflict Definition. Once you separate the people from the problem, your next step is to define the conflict. What is it? Insist that individuals involved in the conflict be specific with their answers. If you are working with a team and a conflict occurs, you may need to define the purpose or mission of the team before you define the conflict. In other words, if the purpose or mission is not clear, people may be confused about what tasks need to be done and what outcomes should be achieved. Conflict can arise from this confusion. In a team situation, the leader must take the time to bring the team together and clarify the purpose or mission.

After the purpose or mission is clear, ask the individuals involved in the conflict to be specific about the disagreement. Use techniques such as asking each person to write down what the conflict is and then having each person verbalize his or her understanding of the conflict in the group.

Collaboration. Once the conflict is defined, your task is to work collaboratively to resolve it. Collaboration relies on creative problem solving to identify solutions. You can use these techniques and activities whether you are working with one individual or a group of people:

- Allow individuals to express risky ideas without correcting them. For example, saying, "Let me play the devil's advocate" is almost certain to cut off creative problem solving.
- Allow people to work through mistakes and discover their own solutions.
- Allow time for the creative process to work.

- Put on your cheerleading hat (praise individuals).
- If necessary, put on your mediator hat and help solve the conflict.

If you are involved in a team, you may need to meet individually with certain members of the team, particularly if individuals are having personal or performance problems. As a team leader in this type of situation, you need to put on your consoling and/or management hats.

Freedom from Blame. As a leader of a team or a person involved in a conflict with one or more people, do not blame others or call people names. Use *I* statements rather than *you* statements. *You* statements can lead to a chain reaction that can go like this.

Person 1: You made a terrible mistake.

Person 2: I didn't make a mistake; you did.

Person 1: You're lying and you know it.

Person 2: I am not. You're the liar.

It is much better to say something similar to the following:

I understand the task is difficult. What do we need to do to fix this problem?

Figure 5-3 lists several additional suggestions for resolving conflicts.

Nonverbal Communication

Although what is said is an important part of communication, another important area is nonverbal communication. If you are suspect of this statement, try walking into a crowded elevator; rather than adopting the normal behavior of turning around and facing the door, stand there and face the other people in the elevator. If you want to create even more tension, smile at everyone. Some may smile in return; others may glare at you; and some may even project fear, thinking you have some evil intent. Why? You have broken the rules of nonverbal elevator behavior in North America.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

- Identify what is causing the conflict. Is it power, resources, recognition, or acceptance? Many times the need for these items is at the heart of the conflict.
- Determine what each person needs or wants. Ask questions to determine what the other person wants. Be willing to listen to the other person. Everyone feels a deep need to be understood. By satisfying that need in the other person, you may be able to lessen the conflict. If you do not understand what the other person is saying, paraphrase what you think you heard and ask for clarification. Be open to what the other person tells you.
- Identify points of agreement. Work from these points first. Then identify points of disagreement.
- Create a safe environment. Establish a neutral location and establish a tone that is accepting of the other person's views and feelings. Acknowledge the other person's feelings. Behind anger may be fear. Let the other person tell you how he or she is feeling.
- Do not react. Many times individuals act too quickly when a conflict occurs. Step back, collect your thoughts, and try to see the situation as objectively as possible.
- Do not seek to win during a confrontation. Negotiate the issues and translate the negotiation into a lasting agreement.
- Listen actively. Watch the individual's eyes; notice body language.

FIGURE 5-3 Resolving Conflict

People use a variety of nonverbal communication methods to convey meaning, including these:

- Body language
- Voice quality
- Time
- Space

As you study this section, know that the statements made here apply only to natives of North America. You have already learned that language has different meanings in different cultures; so do body language, voice quality, time, and space. *You must not assume that nonverbal behavior in other cultures has the same meanings in North America.* Costly and embarrassing mistakes can occur if you make such an assumption. You must study the individual cultures to understand their nonverbal communication. At the end of this section are several paragraphs devoted to nonverbal communication in Asian cultures.

Body Language

Body language is extremely important in face-to-face communication. Assume you are involved in this situation:

As an administrative professional, you have one part-time employee reporting to you. This person generally does a good job; however, today she has made a major error. You call her in to discuss it. When she enters your office, you have a very stern look on your face. You say, "Sit down. I have something very important to discuss with you." When you tell her to sit, you point to the chair on the opposite side of your desk. (This behavior is contrary to your usual behavior of asking employees to sit at a table in your office where chairs are close to each other.) She immediately sits, but does so on the edge of her chair while crossing and uncrossing her arms throughout the conversation. She also alternately bites her lip and stares at the ceiling. At one point, she begins biting her nails.

What does your body language say? First, you let the employee know you have a real problem by the look on your face and the tone of your voice. You do not offer her a chair at the table; you place yourself behind the desk. You place more distance between you and the employee than you usually do. What does the employee's body language say? By sitting on the edge of her chair and biting her nails, the employee lets you know

she is concerned. By crossing and then uncrossing her arms, she also lets you know she may not be open to some of what you say. She lets you know she is passively absorbing or ignoring the message by staring at the ceiling. Both of you start the meeting operating at a disadvantage. The conversation may not be a good one unless you modify your behaviors significantly.

People transmit body language through their eyes, face, hands, arms, legs, and posture. *However, you must be careful not to judge a person based on one gesture alone.* You must consider all the gestures a person makes, along with what he or she said. Eye contact is extremely important for North Americans. They tend to believe that people who do not make eye contact with them have low self-esteem, are shy, or are uninterested in what they are saying.

In becoming a student of body language, you should observe the eyes, face, hands, arms, legs, and posture of others.

Eyes

Raising one eyebrow is seen as disbelief; raising both eyebrows shows surprise. Winking may mean that a person agrees with you. When a person looks upward and blinks the eyes, he or she may be considering carefully what you are saying. Wide-open eyes may mean fear. As already noted, avoidance of eye contact in North America is seen as lack of respect, insincerity, or dishonesty. In North America, adults have a tendency to say to a child who is looking down while answering a question, "Are you telling me the truth? Look at me when you talk."

Face

Facial expressions often betray a person's feelings. Common facial expressions include frowns (anger or unhappiness), smiles (happiness), sneers (dislike, disgust), clenched jaws (tension, anger), and pouting lips (sadness).

Hands, Arms, and Legs

Tightly clenched hands or wringing hands usually indicate that a person is under some

pressure. Authority and superiority are often indicated when a person stands with his or her hands joined behind the back. Hands that are flat on a table usually indicate a readiness to agree. Hands on hips may indicate aggression, readiness, or even defiance. Boredom or tiredness are indicated by a person resting his or her head in the hands. Tapping or drumming the fingers means impatience.

Crossed arms tend to indicate defensiveness. They seemingly act as a protective guard against an attack by someone, whether that attack is verbal or physical. People who tightly cross their legs seem to be saying they disagree with others. People who have tightly crossed legs and tightly crossed arms usually are feeling negatively about what is being said or what is happening around them. People who cross their legs tightly and kick their feet may be bored. Foot tapping also indicates boredom.

Posture

According to some individuals writing in the field of body language, there are two basic groups of body language postures—open/closed and forward/back.² In the open/closed group, people with arms folded, legs crossed, and bodies turned away are signaling they are rejecting people and messages. People with open hands, bodies facing the speaker, and both feet planted on the ground are accepting of people and messages.

The forward/back group indicates whether people are actively or passively reacting to communication. When a person leans forward and points toward the speaker, he or she is actively accepting or rejecting the message. When a person leans back, looks at the ceiling, writes on a pad, and so on, he or she is either passively absorbing or ignoring the message.

Figure 5-4 indicates other meanings for various body positions.

²"Decoding Body Language," accessed July 12, 2002; available from www.johnmole.com.

INTERPRETATION OF BODY LANGUAGE

Listening	Tilts head, makes eye contact, nods
Evaluating	Chews on pencil/glasses, strokes chin, looks up and right
Eager	Leans forward with feet under chair
Bored	Stares into space, doodles
Aggressive	Leans forward with fists clenched
Rejection	Moves back with arms folded and head down, walks with hands in pocket
Defensive	Clenches hands, stands, crosses arms on chest
Lying	Looks down, shifts in seat, glances at you
Anger	Clasps hands behind back
Disbelief, doubt	Rubs eye
Sincerity, openness	Offers open palm
Confidence	Walks briskly with upright posture
Authoritative	Steeple fingers
Indecision	Pulls or tugs at ear

FIGURE 5-4 Interpretation of Body Language

Voice Quality

The loudness or softness and the pitch of the voice are nonverbal behaviors that can reveal something about a person. A loud tone of voice usually is associated with anger; a soft tone, with calmness. When two people are talking softly with each other, they are probably at ease. Higher-pitched voices tend to mean that people are tense, anxious, or nervous. People often talk faster when they are angry or tense. In contrast, a low pitch and a slow pace indicate an intimate or relaxed tone. Other forms of nonverbal voice communication include a nervous giggle, a quivering emotional voice, and a breaking stressful voice.

Voice quality is so important that individuals whose voices are important to their job success, such as TV and radio newscasters, spend time and effort to be certain that their voices do not irritate listeners. For example, a nasal or high-pitched voice can be extremely irritating to listeners.

Time

Another important nonverbal communicator is time. Think about the implication time has for North Americans. Being punctual for an interview lets the prospective employer know you care about the position. Being late for an interview sends the reverse message. In a school situation, a late paper or project may result in a penalty for the student.

In other cultures, time may not have the same meaning. For example, in Spain, Greece, Mexico, and Italy, being punctual is not as important as it is in North America. Being 30 minutes late to an appointment is perfectly acceptable. Lingering over a cup of coffee at an outdoor café in Italy is commonplace any time of day; servers do not pressure customers to leave. In contrast, in North America, once their food is served, people eat quickly, expect to have the check by the time they are



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

Being late for an interview can indicate noninterest in the job.

finished eating, pay for their food, and leave immediately. People rarely linger over their meals unless they are enjoying a leisurely meal with friends.

Space

Proxemics (the study of personal and cultural use of space) was coined by E. T. Hall in 1963 when he investigated people's use of personal space in contrast with fixed and semi-fixed feature space, such as partitions within an office and furniture. Hall found that people in different cultures perceive and use space in relationship to fixed and semi-fixed features differently. In addition, North Americans also observe well-established spatial territories when communicating with others.

Behavioral studies show that individuals perceive spatial distances between others differently depending on various relationships with individuals. People use four space differences between themselves and others.

- Intimate distance (6–18 inches) is for embracing or whispering.
- The distance for talking with good friends is 1.5–4 feet.
- Social distance for conversations among acquaintances is 4–12 feet.
- The distance for public speaking is 12 feet or more.

Research supports the fact that violating a person's personal space can have adverse effects on communication. If someone you know gets too close, you back away. If the person knowingly or unknowingly invades *your space*—something you probably take quite seriously, you may avoid other conversations with the individual.

Humans, like animals, establish ownership of certain territories. For example, do you have a certain desk or chair in a classroom that you consider yours? Do you feel displaced when someone else occupies that space? Do you confront the person, saying, "You are in my space?" This act of laying claim to and defending a territory is termed **territoriality**. Territoriality is established so

quickly that by the second class period or by the second series of a lecture, the audience returns to their same seats. If you are working, have you ever arrived at the workplace to find someone else at your desk? If so, what was your reaction? You may have felt violated. You may have wondered or even said, "What are you doing at my desk?"

People also give certain meanings to the types of furniture in an office or the size of the office and the furniture. For example, the offices of vice presidents of an organization are generally of the same size. The president's office is larger, with furnishings that are more lavish. Administrative support personnel often do not have individual offices; instead, they have workstations with modular walls. However, if you are an administrative assistant to the president or even a vice president, you may have your own office.

The proxemics of North American homes also explain how people use space. Some rooms of the home are for public gatherings; for example, the living room. Other rooms are considered off-limits to all individuals, with the exception of the people using the space. For example, the master bedroom and bath are usually off-limits to even close friends.



You have taken my chair. Please move.

Other family members may or may not be welcome in this area. The kitchen or dining room table is usually designed to provide for a cozy, comfortable family atmosphere. The seating arrangement of people gathered around a table provides for direct eye contact and close proximity.

Asian Nonverbal Behavior

As the global village continues to shrink, everyone must become more sensitive, more aware, and more observant of the nonverbal communication of people from other cultures. North Americans must be aware that nonverbal behavior may be quite different in other cultures, and they must respect, learn, and understand the nonverbal nuances of others.

Listed below is information about nonverbal communication common in China, Japan, and Korea. Figure 5-5 lists a number of Asian cultural values.

China

- Generally speaking, China is not a touch-oriented society. Public displays of affection are rare.

ASIAN CULTURAL VALUES

- Respect for elders
- Unquestioning respect for authority
- Loyalty to family
- Concept of shame—one must not bring dishonor or disgrace to family or self
- Control of emotions, self-discipline and self-control
- Education
- Group consensus
- Interdependence
- Perseverance, conformity, loyalty, hard work, and frugality
- Group consensus
- Humbleness

FIGURE 5-5 Asian Cultural Values

- Personal space is much less in China. The Chinese will stand much closer than Westerners.
- Pushing and shoving in stores or when groups board public buses or trains is common. Apologies are neither offered nor expected.
- Silence is perfectly acceptable and customary. Silence is a sign of politeness and of contemplation.
- When walking in public places, direct eye contact is uncommon.

Japan

- Japan is not a touch-oriented society. Public displays of affection are rarely seen.
- Bowing is the traditional greeting.
- No hugging and kissing takes place when greeting someone.
- The Japanese consider it rude to stare. Prolonged direct eye contact is impolite or even intimidating.
- The Japanese consider it insulting to point to someone.
- Smiling in Japan can cover a gamut of emotions—happiness, anger, confusion, regret, or sadness.
- Displaying an open mouth (such as yawning or a wide-open laugh) is considered rude.
- The Japanese like to avoid saying *no*.
- Waving the hand back and forth in front of one's own face means *I do not know* or *I do not understand*.

Korea

- No hugging and kissing takes place when greeting people.
- Public displays of affection are very rare.
- Respect is shown to elderly people.
- Laughter shows many emotions—anger, frustration, and fear.
- Correct posture is important, especially when seated. Koreans do not slouch or put their feet on desks or chairs.
- Entering a room without knocking first is impolite.

- Blowing your nose in public is rude.
- When entering a private home, it is usually customary to remove your shoes.³

The Workplace—An Effective Communication Community

The workplace, whether an established location and building or a virtual one in which individuals connect through technology, is a **community**. The workplace is composed of a group of people with certain common interests. Effective communication, both verbal and nonverbal, allows common community

³Gary Imai, "Gestures: Body Language and Nonverbal Communication," accessed July 12, 2002; available from www.csupomona.edu.

interests to flourish. Ineffective verbal and nonverbal communication contributes to the impediment of common community interests.

Throughout this chapter, you examined ways to make your verbal and nonverbal communication more effective. Learning about and practicing effective verbal and nonverbal techniques must continue. Communication is a growth process. As new situations confront you, pay attention to what is and is not being communicated. Consider the people with whom you are communicating. Learn as much as you can about their background and experiences. Attempt to view the world from their point of reference. After a particularly difficult communication situation, evaluate what happened. Determine what went right and what went wrong. For future communication, consider how you might correct what went wrong. Make it your goal to be an effective verbal and nonverbal communicator. ■



© GETTY IMAGES/EYEWIRE

The workplace is a community of people with common interests.

SUMMARY

To reinforce what you have learned in this chapter, study this summary.

- Developing verbal and nonverbal communication skills is an ongoing process. You can always learn more about effective communication with others.
- When listening and understanding, engage in these behaviors—listen actively, understand the relationship between self-esteem and communication, examine your inference ladder, cope with criticism, be nonjudgmental, and willingly accept change.
- Using language appropriately and resolving conflicts enhances effective speech and understanding.
- Conflict resolution involves separating the people from the problems, defining the conflict, collaborating, and not blaming.
- Nonverbal communication can be just as important as verbal communication.
- People use a variety of nonverbal communication methods, including body language, voice quality, time, and space.
- Body language includes gestures made with the eyes, face, hands, arms, and legs, and with posture.
- Body language differs from country to country. North Americans can never assume that the body language of people from another country can be interpreted in the same way as North Americans interpret body language.
- The workplace, whether an established location and building or a virtual one in which individuals connect through technology, is a community in that it is a group of people with common interests. Through effective communication, both verbal and nonverbal, the common community interests are furthered. Often common community interests are ignored due to ineffective verbal and nonverbal communication.

FIND THE PROBLEM

Chan Ying is visiting People Pharmaceuticals from the Gungzhou, China, facility. This is his first visit to Dallas, Texas. You have been asked to pick him up at the airport and bring him to the Dallas office.

You prepare a large sign with his name, Chan Ying, printed in black letters. He does speak English; you do not speak Chinese. When he arrives, you greet him with a low bow and say, "I am happy to meet you Mr. Ying." You hand him your business card, which has your name printed in English. You insist on helping to carry his luggage, although he tells you he can handle it himself. As you drive to the Dallas office, you indicate several historical sites, using your finger to point to the location. Since he has been to the United States previously, you engage him in a conversation about what he likes about the country. You keep up a dialogue throughout your trip. When you get back to the office, you introduce him to Sandra Portales as Mr. Ying. She acknowledges the introduction by shaking his hand and saying, "I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Chan."

What problems are evident in your communication?

PROFESSIONAL POINTERS

Practice these tips when communicating with others.

- Respect cultures and traditions that are different than your own.
- Avoid stereotyping or generalizing.
- Assume that people can always be trusted until proven otherwise.
- Always seek to understand others and their behaviors.
- Encourage cooperation rather than competition.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Listen to an associate's point of view without interrupting.
- Respond calmly to a loud or angry voice. An angry response only generates anger.
- If you disagree with someone's ideas, deal with the disagreement calmly and rationally—not angrily and emotionally.

REINFORCEMENT ITEMS

1. Define verbal communication and explain why verbal communication is not simple.
2. List six techniques that help you to listen and understand more effectively.
3. Explain four techniques for resolving conflicts.
4. List and explain four nonverbal communicators.
5. Explain what is meant by the statement "The workplace, whether that workplace is an established location and building or a virtual one in which individuals connect through technology, is a community." What relevance does this statement have for communication?

CRITICAL-THINKING ACTIVITY

As a part-time administrative assistant reporting to Kurt Rupprecht, you have been given an excellent opportunity to be part of a workplace team. Kurt will chair the team; he has told you that your role will be more of an observer than a participant. However, he has also told you to feel free to make occasional suggestions. The team is composed of seven administrative professionals (with you being the eighth one); its task is to establish a mentoring program for new administrative professionals joining People Pharmaceuticals. At the first meeting, Kurt delivers the charge to the group—establish a mentoring program for new administrative professionals at People Pharmaceuticals. The mentoring program is to be ready for implementation in six months; the total cost of the mentoring program per new employee is not to exceed \$10,000. Kurt asks the group to come to the next meeting with suggestions as to what should be included in the mentoring program and how it should be implemented.

At the second meeting, a major conflict arises. Three individuals in the group suggest that the administrative professionals within People Pharmaceuticals be used as trainers for the new professionals. Two members of the group strongly disagree with this suggestion, stating that the administrative professionals in the company have a biased view and that outside consultants should do

the training. Two administrative professionals try to act as mediators in the dispute but have no success. At one point, two people begin screaming at each other, making the following statements:

- You are totally out of touch with reality. Our internal people do not have the skills to conduct the training. Why in the world would you make such a stupid suggestion?
- You are so wrong, but I should have known you would conduct yourself this way. When I discovered you were going to be on the team, I should have declined the invitation to be a part of it. You are always "off the wall" in your suggestions. Do you ever think about what you are going to say before you say it? Your mouth always seems to overload your brain.

Kurt suggests to the group that the meeting be adjourned, stating that tempers need to cool. He asks the team members to come to the next meeting prepared to discuss what happened and how the conflict can be resolved.

After the meeting, Kurt asks you to share with him your impressions of what happened. What do you say to Kurt? What should Kurt do as team leader to help resolve the conflict?

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Complete the Vocabulary Review for Chapter 5 given on page 49 of the *Applications Workbook*.

ENGLISH AND WORD USAGE DRILL

Complete the English and Word Usage Drill for Chapter 5 listed on page 50 of the *Applications Workbook*.

WORKPLACE APPLICATIONS



A5-1 (Goals 1 and 3)

Work in teams of three. Watch two TV variety talk shows (such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Late Night with David Letterman*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, or *Larry King Live*) and two news shows in a talk format (such as *Meet the Press* or *Face the Nation*). Answer the following questions about each show your group chooses.

- Is the host an effective verbal communicator? Explain. What elements of effective verbal communication does the host demonstrate?
- How does the host deal with conflict on the show? Explain. Does the host attempt to help resolve conflict? If so, how?
- What nonverbal communication does the host use?
- What nonverbal communication do the guests use?

Present your findings in a written report to your instructor. Identify the shows that you watched, including the names of the hosts and guests.

A5-2 (Goal 2)

Print two copies of the Listening Assessment provided on the Student CD, SCDA5-2. Rate your listening skills and score yourself. Give one copy of the Listening Assessment to a trusted friend or family member. Ask that person to rate you. Compare the ratings and discuss them with the friend or family member.

A5-3 (Goals 2 and 4)

For one week, pay careful attention to your verbal and nonverbal communication. Using the form provided in the *Applications Workbook* on pages 51–54, record the verbal and nonverbal techniques you used and your effectiveness in using them. Evaluate how you could be more effective in the future. If possible, discuss your communication effectiveness with a trusted family member or friend. Ask that person to offer suggestions for improvement. Using the worksheet that you completed, write a memorandum to your instructor, listing the verbal and nonverbal techniques that you used, along with suggestions for improvement. A memorandum form is available on the Student CD, SCDA5-3. Use these headings in your memorandum:

- Verbal communication techniques
- Nonverbal communication techniques
- Improvement of verbal communication
- Improvement of nonverbal communication

**A5-4 (Goal 3)**

Two locations of People Pharmaceuticals are in France and Japan. Using at least three sources on the Web, research the verbal and nonverbal communication techniques used in these countries. Give an oral report of your findings to the class. Cite the Websites that you used.

A5-5 (Goals 1–4)

Refer to the case study on the Student CD, SCDA5-5a. Read the case and respond to the questions. Write a summary of your responses using the memorandum form on the Student CD, SCDA5-5b. Submit the memorandum to your instructor.

ASSESSMENT OF CHAPTER GOALS

Did you successfully complete the chapter goals? Evaluate yourself by filling out the form on page 55 of the *Applications Workbook*.