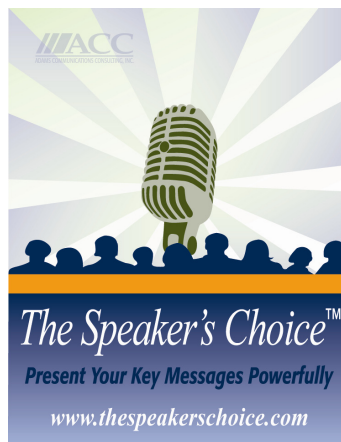


The Speaker's Choice[™]

Communicating Credibility[™]



COMMUNICATING CREDIBILITY

Communicating effectively is crucial for your success in your work and personal life. When you communicate, it is essential that your listeners experience you as credible and trustworthy. They will base this on what you say, how you say it, what they see you doing and what they think your intent is.

Communicating Credibility focuses on the communication skills necessary to build trust and credibility in any communication situation: formal or informal, seated or standing, face to face or over the phone, and in your work and personal lives.

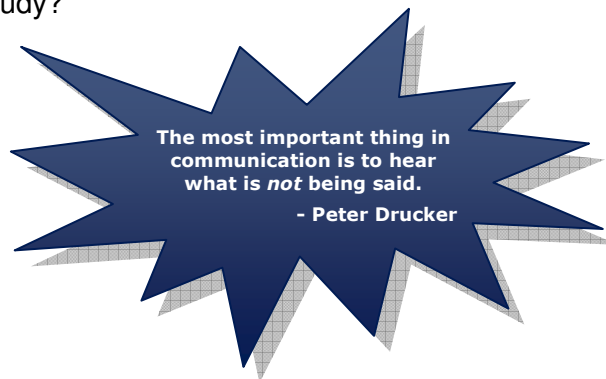
The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your relationships. The quality of your relationships is determined by the quality of your communication.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE PERCEIVED?

The perception others have of you is their reality. How our audience perceives us is of utmost importance. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, a former UCLA professor of social psychology and author of *Silent Messages*¹, describes three areas of communication we focus on: 1) our words (verbal); 2) our sound (vocal); and 3) our body language (visual). Dr Mehrabian found that when others sense a speaker's inconsistencies in what they say, how they say it and what they show with body language—audiences tend to focus on the body language, and voice first to determine credibility. When that happens, content (verbal) plays a very small part in assessing credibility.

What do you believe each area of communication contributes to the perception of one's credibility, according to Dr. Mehrabian's study?

- Verbal %
- Vocal %
- Visual %
- 100%



The ultimate goal is to present a consistent message with all three communication factors.

¹ Mehrabian, Albert, PhD (1981), *Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes* (2nd ed.) Wadsworth, CA

BEHAVIOR SKILLS—STANCE

People will be judging and making decisions about you before you even say a word. It is just human condition. Don't let the way you stand or where you place your hands be more ammunition your listeners have to prejudice you before you start delivering your message.

When standing:

- Stand with your weight balanced evenly on both legs. Your feet should be spaced about hip width apart. Stand up straight, head up and shoulders just slightly pulled back toward the center of your back.
- Have your knees relaxed (no tension) and your weight leaning just slightly forward so that a good portion of your weight is over the balls of your feet.
- Let your arms and hands rest comfortably at your sides. When you use your hand gestures, be sure to let your arms rest at your side once a hand gesture is done. Get comfortable with having your arms resting at your sides is the "home" position.

When seated:

- When you are speaking and want to convey an interested, professional demeanor, sit up straight with only the lower part of your back touching the chair.
- Let your hands rest comfortably on the table when you are using them to gesture.
- Keep your hands free of holding a pen or pencil.
- Have your paper and pen off to the side until you need to access them, then make notes as needed.

BEHAVIOR SKILLS—MOVEMENT

When you have the ability and space to move around, do it. Just be sure it is done in a "purposeful" manner. Follow these guidelines:

- Before you move, finish your thought with the person you are speaking to, pause, and look at someone else, then move. Use the connection with that next person as your reason for moving.
- To avoid "invading" anyone's personal space or appearing too aggressive, pivot your body back toward the center of the room.
- Don't move too often. It will look like you are pacing and nervous. Stay in one spot for at least 45 seconds and then move when you want to connect with a different part of the room!
- Use all the space available to you. Make it a point to get to the ends of the room periodically during your presentation.
- If you are in a conference room and your audience is seated around a table, move from one corner of the head of the table to the other.

BEHAVIOR SKILLS—GESTURES

Using hand gestures can help you convey your message with sincerity. This can help you emphasize points, reflect your emotions and paint a picture in your listeners' minds. By using gestures that come naturally to you, you will burn off energy that helps you relax.

Notice what you do with your hands when you are in your most comfortable settings—with your family and friends. Try expressing naturally with your hands the next time you are in a business setting.

- Always know your audience and how formally or informally they behave and adjust your gestures as needed.
- Let your arms relax at your sides when you are not gesturing. Avoid elbow lock, hands in pockets, hand clasping, arm crossing or placing your hands in any other place that is not natural.

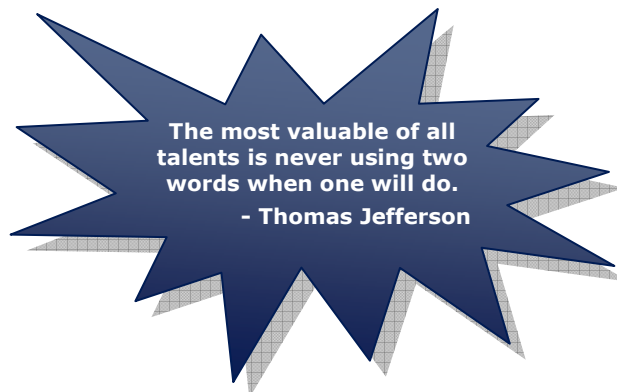
Gestures should be used when you are on the phone, too. Gestures animate our voice.

BEHAVIOR SKILLS—FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions reflect how you feel. If you are feeling excited about something, your face needs to show it. If you are discussing a frustrating topic and want to convey a sense of frustration to your listeners, your face must reveal that.

Showing some emotion is key. You don't want to smile all the time. But if you want to convey sincerity and persuade your listeners to do something, seeing some emotion on your face will help them feel you are serious about your topic and your feeling about it.

When a smile is appropriate, let it out. Your listeners will tend to mirror your smile. With an occasional smile you relax, they relax, and that can turn a tense situation around.



BEHAVIOR SKILLS—PAUSE

You may find that it is distracting or bothersome when you are talking with someone or hear a speech that includes filler words such as “um, you know, like” or any other word spoken too frequently. It is likely that it may be difficult to retain much of the content when someone speaks with too many filler words.

The pause is the cure for eliminating filler words in any communication situation. The first step is to become aware of your filler words. Once you recognize your filler word, begin to replace it with a pause. Catch yourself not ever ending a sentence or plugging gaps with filler words and then build in the discipline of silence. Silence allows the listeners to:

- Soak in and process what you said
- Anticipate what he or she will say next
- Take notes
- Ask a question
- Listeners need silence. They become annoyed if they don't get it. Pausing helps your listeners stay engaged. The benefits you get from pausing include:
 - Time to breathe
 - Remain poised and in control
 - Able to emphasize a point
 - Listen more effectively. You can practice the pause in everyday situations by:
 - Listening to your voicemails before sending. Re-record the message so it is “filler-free” or free of run-on sentences.
 - Noticing if you run out of breath or if your volume trails off at the end of sentences. If it does, commit to pausing and breathing sooner.
 - Asking family, friends and colleagues to notice your filler words in casual situations.

BEHAVIOR SKILLS— VOICE

Taking the opportunity to breathe not only helps you relax but also helps to project your voice. Notice your volume and energy when communicating in one-on-one, small group or in public speaking situations.

If you struggle with volume, practice taking a deep breath when you pause, hold it for a moment and begin to speak when you exhale. You will notice your volume will be louder and you will have more control over your voice to emphasize certain words in your sentences.

BEHAVIOR SKILLS—EYE CONTACT

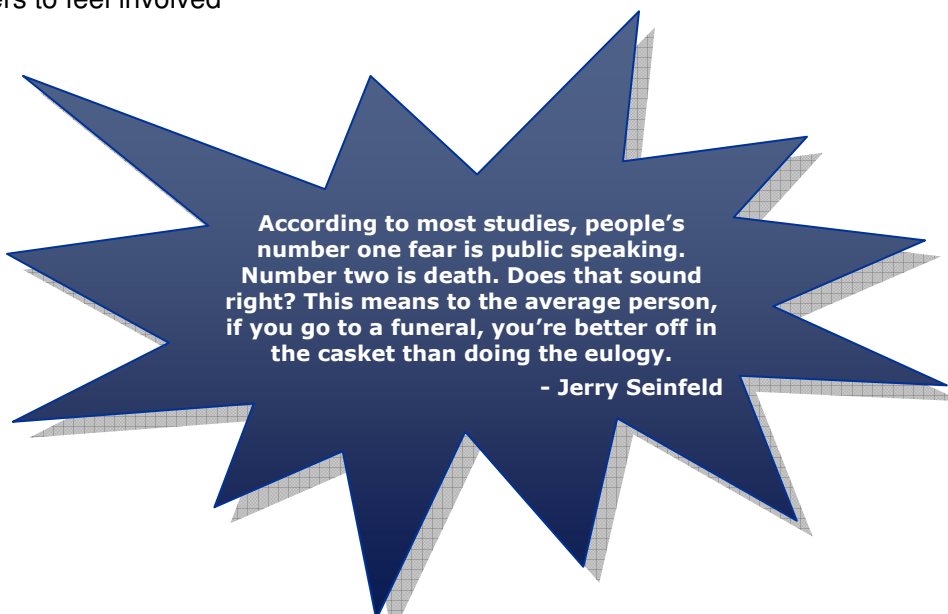
In American culture, eye contact is a gauge to determine if someone is telling the truth. Eye contact is extremely important in all your interactions no matter who the listeners are and in any business or personal situation. Having good eye contact with your listener not only helps to establish your credibility but it also helps you establish a better relationship with your listeners.

Here are a few guidelines:

- Look people in the eye—not over their heads or at their noses, or at the back wall of the room.
- Look at people for a thought, phrase or wherever there is a punctuation mark. When you hear a comma, period, exclamation mark or question mark, pause and shift your eyes to the next person.
- Be sure to include everyone with your eye contact that is in the room. Do not ignore anyone.
- Be sure your eye contact is random. That way, it looks natural.
- During one-on-one situations, notice if the other person is uncomfortable and break away eye contact for a brief moment and then reconnect. When you look away, don't look over they person's shoulder, rather, use an object that is between the two of you.

The benefits you get from eye contact are:

- Establishes a connection with each person
- Being perceived as credible and confident
- Able to observe the listener and gauge interest
- Helps you relax and focus your thoughts
- Enables your listeners to feel involved



According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.

- Jerry Seinfeld

ACTION PLAN

IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOR SKILLS YOU DO WELL/ARE PLEASED WITH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stance | <input type="checkbox"/> Movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gestures | <input type="checkbox"/> Facial Expressions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pause | <input type="checkbox"/> Voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye Contact | |

IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOR SKILL(S) YOU WANT TO STRENGTHEN:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stance | <input type="checkbox"/> Movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gestures | <input type="checkbox"/> Facial Expressions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pause | <input type="checkbox"/> Voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye Contact | |

HOW WILL YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL(S) YOU WANT TO STRENGTHEN?

HOW WILL YOU GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR PROGRESS?



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- The nervousness you may experience is often not seen by your audience.
- Concentrate on one behavior skill at a time for three weeks.
- Remind yourself of the strengths you already have and use those to create new habits.
- Use video/audio recording and live feedback from colleagues to build awareness and strengthen your skills.

NOTES:

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