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Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter you should be able to:

1. Define *verbal communication*
2. Define *nonverbal communication*
3. Develop your verbal and nonverbal communication skills
4. Explain the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication and how they are related
5. Utilize the KEYS approach to conduct yourself with professional excellence through verbal and nonverbal communication in the workplace

chapter 2

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal cues in the workplace can affect much more than how people perceive one another; they can affect professional decisions and business relationships as well.

Researchers at the University of Michigan have found that nonverbal behavior between medical doctors and patients not only impacts how patients view their relationship with their doctors but also influences the doctors' medical decisions. Dr. Stephen Henry, the lead author of the study, noted that both patients and doctors took nonverbal communication into account when interacting with one another. Patients who perceived their doctor's nonverbal communication as aggressive or hurried reported reduced feelings of comfort and talked less about their illness. Also, the study revealed that physicians incorporate their patients' nonverbal communication, such as body language, eye contact, physical appearance, and tone of voice, into their medical decisions (Dallas, 2011). The findings of the study indicated that a better understanding of nonverbal communication can lead to better interactions between doctors and patients, as well as improve the diagnoses of illnesses.

Although the previous study focuses on doctor–patient relationships, it is important to know that nonverbal communication has a significant impact in any professional working environment. Many of the perceptions that people have of one another can be influenced without a single word being said. From the job interview to the exit

interview, your employers, coworkers, and employees all make judgments about you based on your nonverbal cues in communication. However, since many nonverbal gestures are unconscious or unintentional, it is important to be aware of your nonverbal communication at all times and to understand that different gestures carry different meanings to people. What is acceptable in your classroom might not be acceptable in the workplace.

Using nonverbal communication with excellence in the workplace can be an intimidating task; there is no concrete strategy that will work in every situation. However, becoming a critical observer of nonverbal cues in your environment can help you better assess what nonverbal behavior is acceptable or not. In this chapter, you will learn different types of nonverbal cues and how they can affect the workplace based on a variety of factors (e.g., race, gender, environment, ethnicity, etc.).

Verbal Communication

What is verbal communication? **Verbal communication** encompasses both our words and our verbal fillers (e.g., *um*, *like*). Verbal messages are created through language. Effective communication involves accurate interpretations of others' verbal messages as meaning is cocreated. Otherwise, the meanings of the words you communicate will not be successfully understood. So as a professional, you must make effective use of your language skills and improve your abilities to interpret other people's messages. Robinson and Robinson (1982) concluded that if speakers are to be consistently efficient at conveying verbally their intended meanings to listeners, they must understand that intended meanings may not be fully conveyed by a message and that many factors can lead to a listener's failure to understand what a speaker means.

The symbols communicators use are abstract, vague, and sometimes arbitrary. Because symbols can make things a bit off or fuzzy, we have to interpret the meaning. So we construct meanings as we interact with other people and by processing the information in our own heads (Duck, 1994; Keyton & Beck, 2010). This process of meaning construction is also symbolic, because we use words to think about what things mean (Keyton & Beck, 2010; Wood, 2009).

When you really think about it, it is an absolute miracle that we can communicate with one another at all. Really, think about it for a moment. We have selected a bunch of arbitrary symbols we call words and gestures to represent "things." These can be things we have never seen or never can see, such as feelings. Nevertheless, we use those symbols to express our thoughts, desires, and emotions, and somehow communication does occur. Because of the need for interpretation of meaning, being an audience-centered communicator is a must for professional excellence. It is obvious that communication affects how we are perceived by our audience(s). Still today, some people believe that communication works like a pipeline (i.e., if you send a message, the target will no doubt be reached); if you said something and another person heard it, then effective communication has occurred. We all should know from experience that this simply is not the way it works.



Step Back and Reflect Confident Connie

Read the following passage about Connie and answer the questions that follow.

Connie works in the accounting department of a manufacturing company. She often complains to her family and friends that her coworkers do not like her and treat her differently than they do the other staff. She is not invited to lunch outings, and she notices that people walk away when she approaches. She considers herself a friendly, outgoing person and cannot figure out what she is doing wrong. Connie believes her coworkers may resent her because she is able to work well with all her clients and is skilled in accounts reconciliations, resulting in company savings of thousands of dollars each month. She is confident in her abilities and speaks proudly in meetings, providing guidance to her teammates about work issues. She enjoys sharing her success stories and has no apprehension about asking questions in meetings. She has been with the company longer than everyone, including her boss, and she often reminds him of the history of why things are done a certain way. Connie is confident that even if her coworkers are jealous of her abilities, her boss recognizes her value as an employee. However, when she receives her performance review, she is shocked by her supervisor's comments:

"Feedback has been shared with Connie several times on her engagement in team meetings. Connie constantly repeats points discussed and closed in meetings, which is a distraction for several analysts. It is evident that Connie is having a hard time following along in meetings, as points and topics are constantly being repeated for her to understand. Feedback has been shared with Connie on staying on point and not drifting off to other tangents. At times, Connie's body language, comments, and tone of voice during meetings seem aggressive and indicate that she disagrees with her manager. This has been shared with Connie and she has been asked to improve."

Step Back and Reflect

1. What went wrong?
2. How could Connie utilize the KEYS approach to improve her communication interaction?

With little effort, you could give a dozen examples of times when you said something and the listener completely misunderstood the message.

Let's look at an example from the retail industry to illustrate the point. A customer comes into a grocery store and asks for green beans. Trying to provide good customer service, a manager explains, "The green beans are on Aisle 8." Twenty minutes later, the customer is still wandering around the store frustrated. Why? Because canned green beans are on Aisle 8, fresh green beans are on Aisle 1, frozen green beans are on Aisle 14, and the prepared green beans she wanted are in the deli across from Aisle 10. "Green beans" is an arbitrary symbol with various interpretations of meaning.

Verbal communication concerns **communication rules**—shared understanding of what communication means and what constitutes appropriate communication given the context. Two kinds of rules guide communication (Pearce, Cronen, & Conklin, 1979).

Regulative rules describe when, how, where, and with whom to talk about certain things.



Building relationships in the workplace is vital to being a successful professional. Effective communication is part of this process and involves accurate interpretations of both verbal and nonverbal messages.

These same rules also dictate appropriateness. For instance, it might be appropriate for your boss to call you at home after hours, but would it be appropriate for you to do the same if you had a concern about your travel schedule? What's appropriate for the person with power or control may not be for those serving in a subordinate role. To demonstrate professional and workplace excellence, one must be able to monitor his or her own appropriateness when communicating. In addition, **constitutive rules** define what communication means by prompting us to count certain kinds of communication. In other words, we learn what counts as paying attention (e.g., eye contact), showing affection (e.g., kissing, hugging), as well as what counts as being inappropriate (e.g., interrupting conversations, rolling one's eyes; Duck, 2007; Wood, 2009).

Being aware of oneself can be the difference between losing one's job and nurturing a promising career. We see examples of this in the news headlines and front-page stories of our favorite magazines and newspapers. In early 2012, radio talk show host and political commentator Rush Limbaugh caused controversy after he made inflammatory remarks about Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke. Despite the fact that his career is based on sharing his opinions, the words he chose on that fateful day resulted in public and sponsor backlash. What factors led to such an outcry? If he had spoken out in disagreement without name calling, would the reaction have been the same? What are the ethical considerations in this situation? What might you take from this story when considering your verbal communication in the workplace? Undoubtedly, the words we say are extremely important. Yet, of equal importance is what we communicate without words.



Ethical Connection

Read the following passage about Sheila and David, and then answer the questions. As you read, focus on evaluating the professional context.

Sheila and David work for an advertising firm and are partners assigned to work on a major advertising campaign. Sheila is a seasoned account manager, while David is a recent college graduate hired as a junior account executive. He is very enthusiastic and has several ideas that he excitedly shares with Sheila via e-mail. Sheila never responds to the e-mail. In a meeting with management to propose their ideas, however, Sheila takes the lead on presenting; as a result of her nonverbal and verbal communication, management concludes that she was responsible for the work. In fact, when commended on the ideas, she accepts the praise and makes no reference to David. David, on the other hand, is afraid to say anything, and his bosses have no clue that the majority of the ideas were his.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the ethical considerations and dilemmas in this scenario?
2. What did Sheila communicate or not communicate during her presentation and how?
3. What could David have done differently?
4. How would you have handled the situation?
5. Does communicator intent impact the ethics in situations such as this?

Nonverbal Communication

What is nonverbal communication? Put simply, **nonverbal communication** (also referred to as body language) includes all those ways we communicate without words. A more technical definition for nonverbal communication is “communication other than written or spoken language that creates meaning for someone” (Ivy & Wahl, 2009, p. 3).

The literature provides considerable support for the effectiveness of nonverbal communication as a tool for conveying thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, and meaning. Research indicates that about 55% of interpersonal messages are conveyed nonverbally (Lavan, 2002). This seems logical, because most human beings are visually dominant and live in a society dominated by visual images and are thus more inclined to believe the evidence



This photo illustrates a few examples of nonverbal communication—all the ways we communicate without words. In order to achieve professional excellence, one should become a critical observer of nonverbal cues in any environment.



Evaluate the Professional Context A Day With the Chief

Read the following passage about Mark, and then answer the questions. As you read, focus on evaluating the professional context.

Mark is a top-performing salesperson at a pharmaceutical supply company. As a reward for his performance, he is treated to a trip to the corporate office in California to meet the chief executive officer, Ms. Mills. Ms. Mills is known around the office as the “Wicked Witch of the West” because of her short and sometimes abrasive demeanor. His coworkers share “horror stories” of their encounters with her, stating that she rarely makes eye contact, never smiles, and dislikes being approached unless she initiates the conversation. Although he is excited to travel, he is also nervous about what he and Ms. Mills might talk about. He prepares by thinking about how he can share his sales strategies and techniques. On the day of the meeting, he waits patiently for her assistant to call him into her office. When he is escorted in to meet her, he is shocked to see a petite woman behind the large desk smiling back at him with kind eyes. He approaches, shakes her hand, and waits for her permission to sit. Ms. Mills is nothing like the horrible person they made her out to be. Ms. Mills asks Mark several thoughtful questions about why he is successful, ways the staff can be supported, and how the company fits in with his professional goals. Mark feels more and more comfortable as she leans forward to listen intently to what he is saying. Mark loosens his tie, crosses his legs, and begins sharing stories of how he feels his immediate supervisor has dropped the ball on more than one occasion and that the team would be better if more money were allocated toward incentives and bonuses. Mark immediately sees Ms. Mills’ eyes begin to squint and her brow furrow. She stands up abruptly and says in a gruff voice that their time is up and that her assistant will show him out.

Questions to Consider

1. Given the professional context, what would you have done the same and/or different if you were in Mark’s position?
2. Do you think Mark accurately evaluated the context? Why or why not?
3. What factors led to the change in the chief executive officer’s disposition?
4. How could the KEYS process help Mark improve his communication skills?

of the eyes than that of the other senses (Sampson, 1995). In fact, a widely held viewpoint among scholars is that communication is optimized when verbal and nonverbal elements operate in an integrated fashion, producing a coordinated and synchronized effect (Jones & LeBaron, 2002; Laplante & Ambady, 2003). Harrison and Crouch (1975) suggested that verbal communication is only the tip of the communication iceberg and that “nonverbal communication precedes and perhaps structures all subsequent communication” (p. 77).

Nonverbal symbols are everywhere, even though we tend to use verbal forms for our most formal communications. In fact, the nonverbal system accounts for 65% to 93% of the total meaning of communication (Birdwhistell, 1970; Mehrabian, 1981). Nolan (1975) concluded that the many theories of language evolution had one important argument in common: “Nonverbal behavior precedes verbal behavior in the evolution of communication” (p. 101).

What kinds of behavior are included in the term *nonverbal communication*? “Your walk, stance, posture, and footsteps are a form of nonverbal communication. What you

wear and how you look, move, and gesture, as well as the facial and eye expressions you make all count as nonverbal communication” (Ivy & Wahl, 2009, p. 3). What are the purposes of nonverbal communication? Why is nonverbal communication important?

Argyle (1988) suggested that nonverbal behavior serves four purposes. The first function is to express emotion. Consider a moment when you may have had a conflict with a friend or family member. When that person asked you what was wrong, you probably responded, “Nothing,” but you could not control your facial expressions, which indicated otherwise. Displaying appropriate emotion is vital to professional excellence. One should show passion and drive but also demonstrate resilience and be able to triumph over day-to-day disappointments in the workplace. Could you imagine a classroom environment where students displayed extreme emotion each time they received a grade that was lower than expected? How do you think your productivity would be affected?

The second function of nonverbal communication is to convey interpersonal attitudes. Being skilled in observing and interpreting the nonverbal behavior of others will give you an edge over other professionals. For example, a young woman competing for a promotion with another employee noticed that her coworker would always approach their boss with issues first thing in the morning. The coworker would then complain that he had to repeat himself and that their supervisor seemed to forget what he had been told. The young woman observed that her supervisor always seemed rushed and distracted until he had his coffee and had checked and responded to pressing e-mails. She made sure always to approach him when he seemed more relaxed and focused. When he offered her the promotion, her supervisor said he appreciated her timing and how she always kept him in the loop.

The third function is to present one’s personality, such as character, disposition, or temperament. Think about the different work environments you frequent during your week—the bank, the school library, restaurants, etc. What are the character traits of employees at each of these establishments? Do you expect that the librarian will be as outgoing as a server in a crowded bar? Make a list of the top five jobs you have considered, and write down some of the personality traits that might be expected. How might your verbal and nonverbal communication vary between the positions?

Finally, the fourth purpose of nonverbal communication is to accompany verbal communication. Ekman (1965) specified the important ways that verbal and nonverbal behaviors interrelate during human communication. Nonverbal communication can simply *repeat* what is said verbally. It can also *conflict* with what is being said. Verbal and nonverbal communication can be incongruous, or in disagreement. Think of a time at home, work, or school when you experienced someone saying he or she was being truthful yet could not look you in the eye. Did you assume that person was being deceptive? Or think of a time when a loved one said, with a raised voice and tear-filled eyes, that nothing was bothering him or her. When verbal communication carries one message and body language a conflicting message, the result is likely to be communication failure (Jones & LeBaron, 2002; Laplante & Ambady, 2003).

Ekman (1965) also found that nonverbal communication can *complement* or accent a specific part of the verbal message. This can include placing emphasis on certain words by slowing down your speech or changing your tone. Nonverbal behavior can also be a *substitute* for a word or phrase within a verbal message. How many of you have ever nodded instead of saying “yes” when your professor asked you if you understood the curriculum? Or perhaps you have looked away to avoid eye contact instead of saying that you do not want to be called on to answer the question being asked.

In addition to the above, nonverbal communication may also *accent* (amplify) or *moderate* (tone down) parts of the verbal message. As well, nonverbal communication is distinct in its ability to *regulate* verbal behaviors by coordinating our verbal and nonverbal behavior in the production of our messages or those of our communication partner (Ekman, 1965). Imagine the last time you had a conversation with a roommate or friend. How did you determine whose turn it was to speak? Did you use eye contact to end the conversation or to let the other person know you were listening? What hand gestures or sounds might you have made to show your partner that you wanted to speak?

Recall the definition of human communication as presented earlier in the text: the process of understanding our experiences and the experiences of others through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages. In fact, in an effort to categorize the meaning associated with nonverbal behavior, Mehrabian (1981) identified three dimensions that indicate how we use nonverbal communication to make sense of things in both personal and professional contexts:

- *Immediacy*—We react to things by evaluating them as positive or negative, good or bad.
- *Status*—We perceive behaviors that indicate various aspects of status to us, for example, rich or poor, strong or weak, superior or subordinate.
- *Responsiveness*—Our perceptions of activity as being active or passive. This signals the intensity of our feelings about a person or subject.



Remember that our cultural backgrounds can determine how physically close we get to others and how close we let others get to us.

Knapp and Hall (2009) proposed that these three dimensions are basic responses to our environment and are reflected in the way we assign meaning to both verbal and nonverbal behavior.

Now that we have explored the value and importance of nonverbal communication and how we assign meaning, it is crucial that we examine the *components* of nonverbal communication to understand it on a deeper level. Although we focus on these nonverbal communication codes in Western culture, remember that perceptions or reactions to nonverbal communication can vary in other cultures.

Codes of Nonverbal Communication

The primary categories or **codes** of nonverbal communication include vocal expression; space, environment, and territory; physical appearance; body movement, gestures, and posture; facial and eye expressions; and touch (see Table 2.1; Ivy & Wahl, 2009).

Vocal Expression

Vocalics, sometimes referred to as paralanguage, refers to how people use their voices to communicate and express themselves (Foley & Gentile, 2010; Ivy & Wahl, 2009). Vocalic cues include tone (quality) of voice, volume, articulation, pitch (highness or lowness), rate of speech, and use of silence. The voice reveals our emotions, our thoughts, and the

Table 2.1 Nonverbal Communication Codes: Consider the Professional Context

<i>Nonverbal Code</i>	<i>Consider the Professional Context</i>
<i>Kinesics (body movement, gestures, and posture)</i>	How do you think gestures and body movement impact professional contexts?
<i>Facial/eye behavior</i>	Can you think of some examples of professional face and eye behavior? How can face and eye behavior lead to negative perceptions?
<i>Vocalics (paralanguage)</i>	What vocal qualities do you perceive as professional? Unprofessional?
<i>Space/territory</i>	How can space and territorial violations impact business and professional contexts?
<i>Touch</i>	Can you think of positive ways to use touch in professional contexts? In contrast, can you think of some negative uses of touch?
<i>Environment</i>	What are the qualities of a professional environment?
<i>Physical appearance</i>	In what ways does physical appearance impact business and professional communication?

relationships we have with others. A growing body of evidence from multidisciplinary research in acoustics, engineering, linguistics, phonetics, and psychology suggests that an authoritative, expressive voice can make a big difference in one's professional career. Scientific studies show that someone with authority characteristically speaks low, slow, and with vocal intonation (Louet, 2012). Vocalics provide information about our self-confidence and knowledge and influence how we are perceived by others (Hinkle, 2001). Think about the direct impact our tone of voice can have in a professional setting. What does your voice say about you to others?

Space

The impact of space on communication is called **proxemics**, or how people create and use space and distance, as well as how they behave to protect and defend that space (Foley & Gentile, 2010; Hall, 1959, 1966; Ivy & Wahl, 2009). Violations of territory and our personal space can be detrimental in business and professional settings.

Have you ever been on a crowded elevator and been uncomfortable because it seemed

as though people were invading your personal space? When you go to the library, how many of you place your backpacks on the table or chair next to you to claim your space? What would happen if someone sat down in that chair anyway? Violations can be alarming, possibly even threatening. Our relationships with others, power and status, and our cultural backgrounds determine how physically close we get to others and how close we let others get to us (Burgoon & Jones, 1976).

What preferences do you have related to space and distance? Edward T. Hall (1963) identified four zones of space in middle-class U.S. culture. The first is the *intimate zone* (0 to 18 inches). This is usually reserved for our significant others, family members, and closest friends. It is rare that a stranger can enter this space without making us feel violated. These interactions mostly occur in private and signify a high level of connection, trust, and affection. The *personal zone* (18 inches to about 4 feet) is reserved for personal relationships with casual acquaintances and friends. The *social zone* (4 feet to 12 feet) is the distance at which we usually

talk to strangers or conduct business. If you went to your professor's office to discuss a grade, for example, you would most likely remain at a distance of 4 to 12 feet. The *public zone* (more than 12 feet) refers to the distance typical of large, formal, public events. In large lecture classrooms, campaign rallies, or public speeches, the distance between speaker and audience is usually more than 12 feet. Understanding these spatial zones is important to your everyday nonverbal communication competency.



This photo demonstrates how people create and use space and distance. What might happen if someone picked up the computer and sat down in the seat next to her?



Know Yourself Nonverbal Communication

The following report will help you gain a better understanding of your own nonverbal immediacy. Complete each item thoughtfully, and then reflect on the results. How can this knowledge help you be a better communicator?

Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report

This measure will allow you to assess your own nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

Directions: The following statements describe the ways some people behave while talking with or to others. Please indicate in the space at the left of each item the degree to which you believe the statement applies to [fill in the target person's name or description]. Please use the following 5-point scale:

1 = *never*; 2 = *rarely*; 3 = *occasionally*; 4 = *often*; 5 = *very often*.

- 1. I use my hands and arms to gesture while talking to people.
- 2. I touch others on the shoulder or arm while talking to them.
- 3. I use a monotone or dull voice while talking to people.
- 4. I look over or away from others while talking to them.
- 5. I move away from others when they touch me while we are talking.
- 6. I have a relaxed body position when I talk to people.
- 7. I frown while talking to people.
- 8. I avoid eye contact while talking to people.
- 9. I have a tense body position while talking to people.
- 10. I sit close or stand close to people while talking with them.
- 11. My voice is monotonous or dull when I talk to people.
- 12. I use a variety of vocal expressions when I talk to people.
- 13. I gesture when I talk to people.
- 14. I am animated when I talk to people.
- 15. I have a bland facial expression when I talk to people.
- 16. I move closer to people when I talk to them.
- 17. I look directly at people while talking to them.
- 18. I am stiff when I talk to people.
- 19. I have a lot of vocal variety when I talk to people.
- 20. I avoid gesturing while I am talking to people.
- 21. I lean toward people when I talk to them.
- 22. I maintain eye contact with people when I talk to them.
- 23. I try not to sit or stand close to people when I talk with them.
- 24. I lean away from people when I talk to them.
- 25. I smile when I talk to people.
- 26. I avoid touching people when I talk to them.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Scoring for Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report:

Step 1. Start with a score of 78. Add the scores from the following items:

1, 2, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, and 25.

Step 2. Add the scores from the following items:

3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 18, 20, 23, 24, and 26.

Total score = *Step 1* minus *Step 2*.

Source: Richmond, McCroskey, and Johnson (2003).

How did you score? What surprised you about your score? You can also try the measure on others. Simply fill out the measure with another person's behaviors in mind. For instance, you might find it interesting to fill out the survey for your least and most favorite professors to determine whether their nonverbal immediacy might play some role in the degree to which you like them. Do you notice differences in their use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors? Did you learn more in one class? What class did you enjoy more?

Environment

The constructed or natural surroundings that influence your communicative decisions, attitude, and mood are termed the **environment** (Foley & Gentile, 2010; Ivy & Wahl, 2009). People are influenced by environmental factors such as architecture, design, doors, windows, color, lighting, smell, seating arrangements, temperature, and cleanliness (Harris & Sachau, 2005; Jackson, 2005). Take a moment to think about what preferences would be related to your work environment. How does the environment (e.g., temperature, lighting, color, furniture) impact your communication?

Consider other things in the environment that can serve as nonverbal cues about who you are. These environmental factors you create and control are what serve as nonverbal messages to others who enter the space. As one scholar put it, "People cannot be understood outside of their environmental context" (Peterson, 1992, p. 154). The environments we create for ourselves often speak volumes about those relationships we consider most important (Lohmann, Arriaga, & Goodfriend, 2003).

Perceptions of Environment

The way we perceive our environment and the environments of others is an important factor in how we respond. Overall, we perceive the environment in six distinct ways (Knapp & Hall, 2006). The first is *formality*, which is an understanding people have of environment that relates to how comfortably they can behave, in light of their expectations. Sometimes it is more about the atmosphere of a certain place than the place itself. The second way we can perceive the environment is *warmth*. This means that the environment gives off a certain sense of warmth, comfort, or a welcoming context based on our past or current experience. Think of a favorite smell from your childhood, for example. Smells in an environment contribute to our perception of warmth.

Privacy is another way the environment can be perceived. Do you prefer a crowded and noisy restaurant or a peaceful and quiet one? Do you choose a seat in the back of a movie theater or in the middle next to many other moviegoers? Another perception we have is *familiarity*, which means that we tend to react cautiously when we meet new people or are confronted with an unfamiliar environment. Not knowing where we are and what to expect makes us feel less comfortable. We like knowing what to expect and how to behave in the environment.

Another perception of environment is that of *constraint*. Think about your living situation. Do you like sharing a room or home with another person? Whenever we feel that our personal space is being invaded, we feel constrained. Most of our perceptions of constraint are shaped by the amount of privacy and space available to us. The final perception of environment is *distance*. Our perceptions of distance in an environment pertain to physical arrangements. We like to know how far away the closest door is or how many people can fit into an elevator. We create distance by avoiding eye contact or taking a longer route to avoid saying hello to a person we find annoying.



People are influenced by their environments. What are the nonverbal messages in this professional office environment that could impact communication?

Physical Appearance

Physical appearance—“the way our bodies and overall appearance nonverbally communicate to others and impact our view of ourselves in everyday life” (Ivy & Wahl, 2009, p. 129)—also plays an important role in communication. Making the connection between physical appearance and nonverbal communication is important for two reasons: (1) The way we represent ourselves and our physical appearance reveals a lot about who we are, and (2) the physical appearance of other people influences our perception of them, how we talk to them, how approachable they are, how attractive or unattractive we think they are, and so on.

Clothing is also a part of our physical appearance that is often critical to professional situations. Clothing helps you convey a sense of professionalism. Clothing and other appearance aspects, termed **artifacts** (e.g., jewelry, tattoos, piercings, makeup, cologne, eyeglasses), send nonverbal messages and help others form perceptions of us, both good and bad (Okoro & Washington, 2011; Roach, 1997). The nonverbal message sent by your clothing is a powerful part of professional excellence. Appearance is extremely important in our society. In fact, according to Armour (2005), employers also agree that physical appearance matters. An Intranet software firm in the Northeast requires formal business



The way we represent ourselves and our physical appearance reveal a lot about who we are. The nonverbal message sent by your clothing is a powerful part of professional excellence.

attire on the job. Men must wear ties, cannot have beards, and cannot wear their hair past shoulder length. “Clients like to see a workforce that looks conservative,” says the chief operating officer. Although the criteria for what is acceptable in each environment might vary, physical appearance undoubtedly can affect one’s perceived professional excellence.

Body Movement

Kinesics is a general term for the study of human movement, gestures, and posture (Birdwhistell, 1970; Foley & Gentile, 2010; Ivy & Wahl, 2009). Kinesics provides valuable information about a person to others. Have you ever heard someone make reference to how a certain person carries himself or herself? Have you ever talked about a person who has a certain presence in the room? Perhaps some of us have said, “He/she walks like a leader.” Some people carry themselves in ways that convey pride and confidence, while others have poor posture and seem to lack confidence. Ekman and Friesen (1969b) classified movement and gestures according to how they function in human interaction. The five categories of kinesics are emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, and adaptors.

Emblems are specific, widely understood meanings in a given culture that can actually substitute for a word or phrase. An example of this would be placing your pointer finger in front of your lips to indicate to someone to be quiet. **Illustrators** are gestures that complement, enhance, or substitute for the verbal message. If you were describing the length of the biggest fish you ever caught, you might use your hands to illustrate the size. Or when you are giving directions, you might point to show which way to go. **Affect displays** are

facial expressions and gestures that display emotion. A smile can be an affect display for happiness, while a scowl can display frustration. **Regulators** are gestures used to control the turn-taking in conversations. For example, we might make a hand motion to encourage someone or raise our own hand to get a turn at speaking. When we are eager to speak, we normally make eye contact, raise our eyebrows, open our mouths, take in a breath, and lean forward slightly. We do the opposite if we do not want to answer. Head nods, vocal expressions (such as *um*), facial expressions, body postures, and eye contact can be seen as connectors that keep the conversation together and make it coherent. When these sorts of nonverbal cues are absent from a conversation, it might trigger a negative reaction, and we could come to believe that our conversational partner is not listening at all. **Adapters** are gestures we use to release tension. Playing with your hands, poking, picking, fidgeting, scratching, and interacting nonverbally with your environment are all adapters that reveal your attempts to regulate situations and to make yourself feel more at ease and able to function effectively. Adapters can alert us that another person is uncomfortable in some way (Ekman & Friesen, 1969b).

Facial Behavior

Facial expressions (including the study of eye behavior, called **oculesics**) are also critical codes that have been studied by nonverbal communication scholars (Ivy & Wahl, 2009). The face can be considered a gallery for our emotional displays (Gosselin, Gilles, & Dore, 1995). What does another person's face tell you about him or her? What emotion is she expressing? How is he feeling? Are your coworkers surprised to see you? Did your colleagues find your presentation to be entertaining, or were they disappointed? Your face and eye behavior play a huge role in the messages you send in business and professional contexts.

Yet, it is important not only to have a basic understanding of the emotions communicated by the face but also to be aware of how we manage our faces in daily interactions. Social norms and communication expectations in our culture set the rules for what kinds of emotional expressions are appropriate in certain situations. Facial management techniques are categories of behavior studied by Ekman and Friesen (1969a, 1969b, 1975) that determine the appropriate facial response for a given situation. The four most common techniques are neutralization, masking, intensification, and deintensification.

The process of using facial expressions to erase how we really feel is called **neutralization**. People who neutralize their facial expressions are often referred to as having a poker face. **Masking** means hiding an expression connected to a felt emotion and replacing it with an expression more appropriate to the situation. If we use an expression that exaggerates how we feel about something, it is called **intensification**. On the other hand, if we reduce the intensity of our facial expression connected to a certain emotion, it is called **deintensification**.

A significant part of facial expressions involves use of the eyes. About 80% of the information in our everyday surroundings is taken in visually (Morris, 1985). Kleinke (1986) purports that eye contact and gaze functions provide information, regulate interaction, express intimacy, exercise social norms, and facilitate personal, situational, and relational goals. Evasive glances and limited-duration eye contact on the part of a communicator tend to reduce compliance with requests (Gueguen & Jacob, 2002). What can people tell about you by looking into your eyes?



Your Communication Interaction When George Met Sally

Read the passage below, and then answer the questions. As you read, think about ways the KEYS approach could help you improve **your communication interaction** if you were in George's or Sally's position.

Sally began working at a greeting card store in the evening to help pay for her college tuition and books. Her supervisor, George, was very supportive of her goal to do well in all her classes and even allowed her to study when customers were not in the store. For months, Sally shared a lot with George. He was a great listener and always gave her really good advice about how to handle situations in her life, such as car troubles, personal issues, and even tips for studying. Sally felt as though he was the big brother she never had. George found himself growing fond of Sally in a romantic way. He began buying her coffee or dinner and would leave notes at her station just to say thanks for her hard work around the store and how much he appreciated her friendship. Sally had never had a job before and thought she was lucky to have a boss as supportive as George. When Sally found out at the end of the semester that she had made straight As, she rushed to the store to tell George. He was very excited for her. Sally jumped up and down with excitement, and they hugged. George could not help himself and leaned in for a kiss. Sally was surprised and embarrassed. She did not feel the same way about George.

Questions to Consider

1. How should Sally respond to George?
2. Do you believe that Sally and/or George displayed professional excellence?
3. What nonverbal and verbal cues are important in this exchange?
4. How could the KEYS process help Sally and George in this situation?

Touch

Touch, also called **haptics** in nonverbal research, “is the most powerful form of nonverbal communication; it’s also the most misunderstood and carries the potential for the most problems if ill used” (Ivy & Wahl, 2009, p. 45). Several different systems for categorizing touch have been developed to help us better understand this complex code of nonverbal communication. One of the best means of classifying touch behavior was developed by Heslin (1974). The first, **functional/professional touch**, serves a specific function. These touches normally take place within the context of a professional relationship and are low in intimacy. An example would be the essence of greeting rituals in business situations, the *professional handshake* (Hlemstra, 1999). The handshake is critical to making a good first impression as a professional. Think about what you look for in a handshake. What does a professional handshake feel like?

Social/polite touch is connected to cultural norms, such as hugs or pats on the back. Once again, these touches have a relatively low intimacy within a relationship, while **friendship/warmth touch** is the type people use to show their platonic affection toward each other. Hugs and kisses on the cheek might be exchanged between two close friends, for example. **Love/intimacy touch**, on the other hand, is highly personal and intimate.



The handshake is critical to making a good first impression. What are some of the qualities you notice in someone's handshake?

People communicate strong feelings of affection toward each other with these kinds of touches; in this case, hugs may last longer and kisses may be on the lips. The last category involves **sexual arousal**. These touches are extremely intimate.

Forming Relationships With Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Developing interpersonal, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills requires you to differentiate between the content and layers of messages. As you communicate with other people, your messages have two layers (Dillard, Solomon, & Palmer, 1999; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). The first is the content layer. The **content layer** consists of the “information being explicitly discussed” (Adler & Proctor, 2007, p. 16). The content layer may include descriptive information such as the time of a meeting, a project due date, or the names of the coworkers assigned to a team. You exchange content with others to function and retrieve basic information.

The second layer is relational. The **relational layer** reveals “how you feel about the other person; whether you like or dislike the other person, feel in control or subordinate, feel comfortable or anxious, and so on” (Adler & Proctor, 2007, p. 16). The relational layer may be communicated by your choice of words. For example, an executive may call her employees by their first names, while the employees are required to refer to the executive

as Mrs. Villarreal. The difference in formality of names signifies a difference in control. The relational level can also be communicated nonverbally through tone of voice, use of space, and eye contact.

For example, Jason is really nervous about making a deadline, but he can't finish until Rachel completes the financial section of the project. Jason could ask Rachel, "What time will you be done with financials?" to retrieve a specific time reference, such as, "Sometime this evening." These words reflect the content layer. If Jason wants to send the message that he's annoyed with Rachel, he could add a negative tone: "What *time* will you be done with financials?" If Jason is indeed annoyed, then he has effectively communicated both the content and the relational layers of his message. However, if Jason did not intend to express annoyance, then his message is ineffective on the relational level.

There are communicators out there who do not pay attention to the relational layer of their messages. As a result, they don't realize how they're coming across to others. In order to achieve professional excellence, you must think beyond the content layer of your messages and also assess the relational layer. This can be supported by using the KEYS process.



Retail companies compete to provide the best products and service to their customers. What does good customer service look and sound like?

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication and Their Impact on Professions

In this chapter, we have explored verbal and nonverbal communication—why they are important, their definitions, their principles, and their components. As you consider your professional goals, think about how you will use verbal and nonverbal communication to succeed in your career. We have included the following examples of the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication in a variety of industries. Even if your desired profession is not listed in the sections below, know that developing your professional excellence and communication competence is invaluable no matter what path you may take in life.

Customer Service and Sales

Recall the importance of proxemics, or the impact of space on communication. Manning and Reece (1989) found that success in productivity and sales was linked to the distance between sales representatives and prospects, salesperson posture, handshake techniques, facial expressions, arm movements, hand movements, and placement of the legs and feet. Those sales representatives who rely primarily on the spoken word to communicate with prospects may be

neglecting an important tool for conveying their ideas. In addition, Leigh and Summers (2002) conducted an investigation that examined the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in a sales context. Using videotaped presentations, they found that nonverbal cues (eye gaze, speech hesitations, gestures, clothing, and posture) influenced the experimental buyers' perceptions of the sales representative and their evaluation of the sales presentation.

Journalism and Television Broadcasting

Those in the public eye must demonstrate effective nonverbal and verbal communication. How many times have you seen a clip of an on-camera flub being played over and over again on YouTube or the local news? In the opinion of some scholars, as well as television commentators, arrogant body language on the part of many journalists in the United States has led to low public respect and esteem for them (Lehrer, 1998).

Public Service

Individuals who work in environments such as libraries or government offices (e.g., Department of Motor Vehicles, utility companies, etc.) are sometimes criticized for their communication and viewed as distant and unhelpful. There is evidence that individuals who are trained in nonverbal communication can replace negative perceptions of themselves with positive ones (Sampson, 1995).

Hospitality Management

Customer service is especially important in the hotel and restaurant industries. A number of hotel and restaurant managers have improved their organizations' image among guests by providing client services employees (e.g., hosts, servers, desk clerks, bell hops) with training in verbal and nonverbal communication (Jafari & Way, 1994). In restaurants, eye contact, facial expression, body position, and posture of the staff, including servers and cashiers, affect how customers rate the value of the service (Martin, 1986).

Medical Professions

Many people can probably share a story about an unpleasant experience at the doctor's office. As physicians compete to attract and retain a strong client base, their services can be interpreted positively by potential patients through correct body language on the part of the physicians and their employees. Patients often choose a physician based on their perceived image of the doctor, as revealed by verbal and nonverbal communications (Hill & Garner, 1991).

Teaching Professions

There is evidence that the nonverbal communication of teachers influences the evaluation direction (positive or negative) and level of performance they receive from their students (Babad, Avni-Babad, & Rosenthal, 2003). Consider the different teaching and communication styles of your current professors. What do you find are the common communication traits of the professors you enjoy most?

Legal Professions

A study has indicated that lawyers can project a favorable impression of themselves and their firms for prospective clients through sustained eye contact and other forms of body language, such as an erect but relaxed sitting position and close proximity to the clients (Clarke, 1989).

Accounting and Finance

In the same vein as lawyers, accountants can benefit through the technique of maintained and appropriate eye contact, good posture, and close proximity to clients (Pickholz & Zimmerman, 2002).

Management (Private and Public)

Managers in both business and not-for-profit organizations can more effectively convey ideas to their employees through correct use of nonverbal communication (Hancock, 1999; McCaskey, 1979). On the other hand, job evaluations of employees by their supervisors have been found to correlate with smiling, gaze, hand movement, and body orientation (DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999). In a similar vein, managers can effectively convey impressions of empathy and power through body language (Gabbott & Hogg, 2000).

KEYS to Excellence in Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

The opener to this chapter discussed how nonverbal communication can affect the quality of interaction (and health outcomes) between medical doctors and patients. Can this same logic be applied to your professional communication? Think about how using the KEYS strategies can positively affect your nonverbal communication with others. The first step, *know yourself*, asks you to inventory the types of nonverbal cues you display to others. This can be difficult, but try to be aware even of the small, unconscious nonverbal cues you create. Sometimes the worst nonverbal cues we display are the ones we are not even aware of making.

The next step, *evaluate the professional context*, requires that you assess what nonverbal signals are considered acceptable in your workplace. Are your meetings informal, or is there a set decorum on how people interact? Notice how both your coworkers and superiors convey nonverbal cues during workplace interactions, and gauge how your nonverbal cues line up with those of others in your company.

The third step, *your communication interaction occurs*, involves taking an immediate reflexive inventory of both your nonverbal communication and your partner's. How do you react to your partner's nonverbal signals? How does he or she react to yours? Think about what sets you at ease when communicating with others, and try to accomplish the same goal when talking with customers, employees, or superiors. The more open people feel when talking with you, the more likely they will disclose information more honestly and comfortably.

The final task, *step back and reflect*, requires you to analyze your communication after the interaction has ended. Did you walk away feeling satisfied with your nonverbal

communication? Did your communication partner seem at ease when talking with you? Assess what seemed to be the most effective nonverbal cues and which ones appeared to create a negative perception.

Much like the interaction between doctors and patients, your nonverbal cues can set people at ease and make them feel comfortable talking to you. This can lead to better (and more honest) communication and allow you to practice professional excellence in the workplace.



Know Yourself



Evaluate the Professional Context



Your Communication Interaction Occurs



Step Back and Reflect

Executive Summary

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you can do the following.

Define verbal communication:

- Verbal *communication* is both our words and verbal fillers (e.g., *um*, *like*). Verbal messages are created through language. Effective communication involves accurate interpretations of others' verbal messages as meaning is cocreated (p. 26).

Define nonverbal communication:

- *Nonverbal communication* (also referred to as body language) includes all those ways we communicate without words (p. 29).

Develop your verbal and nonverbal communication skills:

- Developing interpersonal, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills requires you to differentiate between the content and layers of messages. As you communicate with other people, your messages have two layers (p. 41).
- The *content layer* consists of the "information being explicitly discussed" (Adler & Proctor, 2007, p. 16). The content layer may include descriptive information such as the time of a meeting, a project due date, or the names of the coworkers assigned to a team (p. 41).
- The *relational layer* reveals "how you feel about the other person; whether you like or dislike the other person, feel in control or subordinate, feel comfortable or anxious, and so on" (Adler & Proctor, 2007, p. 16). The relational layer may be communicated by your choice of words (p. 41).

Explain the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication and how they are related:

- Some communicators do not pay attention to the relational layer of their messages. As a result, they don't realize how they're coming across to others. In order to achieve

professional excellence, you must think beyond the content layer of your messages and also assess the relational layer (p. 42).

Utilize the KEYS approach to conduct yourself with professional excellence through verbal and nonverbal communication in the workplace:

- The first step, *know yourself*, asks you to inventory the types of nonverbal cues you display to others. This can be difficult, but try to be aware even of the small, unconscious nonverbal cues you create. Sometimes the worst nonverbal cues we display are the ones we are not even aware of making (p. 44).
- The next step, *evaluate the professional context*, requires that you assess what nonverbal signals are considered acceptable in your workplace. Are your meetings informal, or is there a set decorum for how people interact? Notice how both your coworkers and superiors convey nonverbal cues during workplace interactions, and gauge how your nonverbal cues line up with those of others in your company (p. 44).
- The third step, *your communication interaction occurs*, involves taking an immediate reflexive inventory of both your nonverbal communication and your partner's. Think about what sets you at ease when communicating with others, and try to accomplish the same goal when talking with customers, employees, or superiors. The more open people feel when talking with you, the more likely they will disclose information more honestly and comfortably (p. 44).
- The final task, *step back and reflect*, requires you to analyze your communication after the interaction has ended. Did you walk away feeling satisfied with your nonverbal communication? Did your communication partner seem at ease when talking with you? Assess what nonverbal cues seemed the most effective and which ones appeared to create a negative perception (p. 44).

Discussion Questions

1. What two rules guide communication? Why is appropriateness important when communicating? Share an example of a time when you experienced inappropriate communication. Who was the communicator? Why was it inappropriate?
2. Ethical consideration: In a workplace, when, if ever, is it appropriate to verbally communicate something that is not true? Does this apply to your personal relationships? Ask three people this same question, and note their responses.
3. What are the principles of nonverbal communication? Discuss at least two nonverbal communication codes. Which codes discussed in this chapter are the most important to you as a professional?
4. Name three reasons why nonverbal communication is important. Work through a personal example of a time when you needed to improve your verbal or nonverbal communication. What changes would you have made in the situation?
5. Step back and reflect on a time when you received criticism at work or school. How did you respond verbally? How did you respond nonverbally? How did the environment contribute to your communication?

Terms to Remember

adapters (p. 39)	functional/professional touch (p. 40)	oculesics (p. 39)
affect displays (p. 38)	haptics (p. 40)	physical appearance (p. 37)
artifacts (p. 37)	illustrators (p. 38)	proxemics (p. 34)
codes (p. 33)	intensification (p. 39)	regulative rules (p. 27)
communication rules (p. 27)	kinesics (p. 38)	regulators (p. 39)
constitutive rules (p. 28)	love/intimacy touch (p. 40)	relational layer (p. 41)
content layer (p. 41)	masking (p. 39)	sexual arousal (p. 41)
deintensification (p. 39)	neutralization (p. 39)	social/polite touch (p. 40)
emblems (p. 38)	nonverbal communication (p. 29)	verbal communication (p. 26)
environment (p. 36)		vocalics (p. 33)
friendship/warmth touch (p. 40)		

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