

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

what it is --
part 1 of
three parts

During the past half century, social scientists of all kinds, semanticists, psychologists, etc., have been engaged in studying the relationship of people. They have analyzed their individual drives and motivations. They have studied their groups and organizations.

The purposes of these efforts have been manifold. Some of these are:

- To study behavior itself.
- To determine organizational make-up.
- To find causes of problems arising between and among people.
- To discover ways to overcoming interpersonal problems so that better quality and quantity of production can result.

Out of this mass of scientific research and study, one problem manifests itself above all others. It seems to concern itself not only with individuals but also in organizations. This problem is one of communications.

Communications can be defined as the process of transmitting and receiving a message from one individual or place to another.

There are two basic types of communications, verbal and non-verbal. Both can be found in use in organizations, by individuals and by groups. These types can be further divided as follows:

-Verbal: *Expressive* communications which include both speaking and writing.

Receptive communications which include both listening and reading.

-Non-verbal: Many types of communication indicators, such as posture, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc.

efficiency in carrying on such interpersonal and intergroup dialogue. Some of these that are familiar to many include:

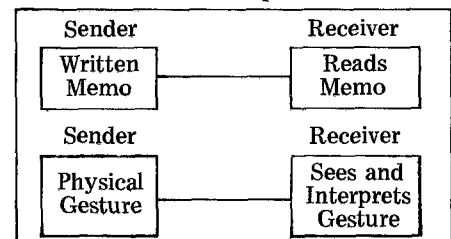
- Speaking: Public speaking courses, Dale Carnegie course, Toastmaster clubs.
- Writing: Letter writing courses, speech and story writing.
- Listening: Nichol's Listening Comprehension course, Xerox's Effective Listening course.
- Reading: Evelyn Wood's Speed Reading course and many other courses using programmed instruction and mechanized aids.

Based on the time, money and effort which has gone into the teaching of verbal communication skills, a person would get the feeling that non-verbal communication was comparatively unimportant. However, non-verbal communication may be more important than any one type of verbal communication because:

- It takes both verbal and non-verbal communication for clear communication in most cases.
- Probably more feelings, intentions, and emotions are communicated non-verbally than through all the verbal methods put together.

When various means of communication are used, we have situations like the following:

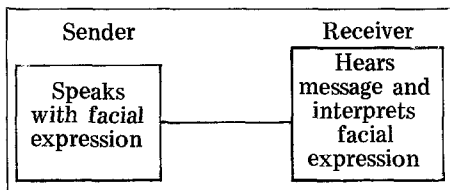
Singular— Where either one verbal or non-verbal method is involved by each person involved.



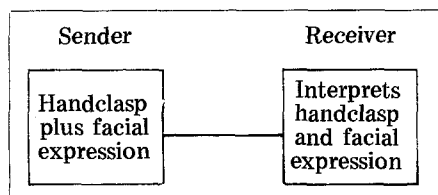
GEORGE W. PORTER
Management Training Supervisor,
Southern Bell Telephone
and Telegraph Company,
Atlanta, Georgia

In the verbal communication field, much has been written and many courses devised to develop and expand

Combination— Where more than one verbal and non-verbal method are involved by each person.



Pluralistic— Where two or more either verbal or non-verbal methods are involved by each person.



It would seem, therefore, that we who are interested in the total area of communication should spend more time than we do in analyzing, studying and trying to understand meanings which are transmitted non-verbally.

Many decisions are made both in interpersonal and inter and intra-organizational situations which are based on non-verbal cues or clues. Without an accurate reading of these signs, erroneous decisions can be made. This can result in loss of time, money and morale.

Perhaps for the sake of examination we can divide non-verbal communications into four classifications:

- Physical: This covers the personal method, i.e., facial expressions, tone of voice, sense of touch, sense of smell and body emotions.
- Esthetic: This covers creative expressions such as found in instrumental music, the dance and in other artistic structures of painting, sculpture, etc.

—Symbolic: This covers those methods of conveying a message by religious, status or ego building symbols.

—Signs: This covers more or less mechanical methods of conveying a message. Such things as signal flags, the 21 gun salute, horns, sirens, etc.

PHYSICAL COMMUNICATIONS

There seem to be five main categories of physical communications. These five are:

- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice
- Touch
- Smell
- Body motions

As we think about the facial expressions and the meaning which can be conveyed by them we can readily think of the many ways we use our faces:

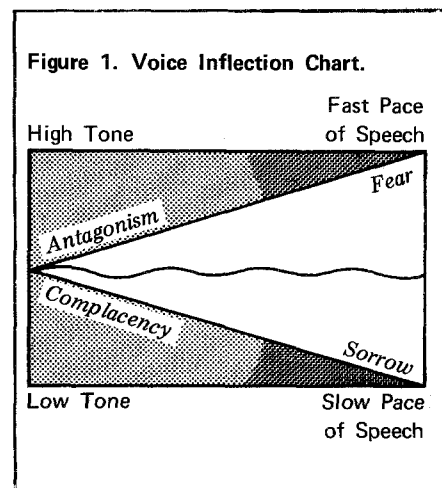
- Displeasure or confusion may be shown by a frown or by the sticking out of the tongue.
- Envy or disbelief might be displayed by the raised eyebrow.
- Antagonism might be shown through the tightening of the jaw muscles or by the squinting of the eyes.
- Anticipated pleasure or flirtation may be shown by a wink. Or a wink might be used to signify disbelief.
- The eyes tell stories of emotion and feeling.
 - ... Watch a couple who are in love. Words need not be spoken for meaning to flow between them.
 - ... Watch two people who are angry at each other. Words need not be spoken for meaning to flash like electricity from one person's eyes to the other's.

This faculty of reading each other's eyes is akin to mind reading. A case was told about a father and daughter who had so much rapport between them that they could be sitting at opposite sides of a room and by merely looking at each other's eyes decide not only what the other was thinking but what the other's action was going to be next.

The tone of the voice may be used to signify many things also.

- Inflection of the voice may show fear, antagonism, joy, cooperation, sorrow or complacency. If we chart inflection of voice using a center line as representing the normal voice pattern, then divergence from this norm could be indicators of the various things enumerated. See Chart I.
- Rapidity of speech may also indicate the same feelings as inflection does. In fact the two seem, in most instances, to go along together.
- The tonal emphasis on various words in a sentence can also give entirely different meanings. For example: (Place emphasis on italicized word.)
 - Joe, what was that?
 - Joe, *what* was that?
 - Joe, what *was* that?
 - Joe, what was *that*?

In *Life Magazine* there was a short paragraph on the "Touching Game."



"It starts at twelve. Boys and girls who shunned each other's company till then start squeal-punctuated wrestling matches. Maturity brings about more subtlety to the touching game. The sun-bronzed Apollo says: 'Come for a swim.' She lets him lead her. But it's not the water that interests them. It's skin on skin, her against him. When they come back, they lie as close as sardines, sun-tanning, although there are miles of beach to spread out upon. Guiding his hand as he lights her cigarette, gives her a chance to kindle a spark with her touch, to lower her long lashes, to lean toward him so he can breathe the fragrance of her hair. Two can play at this touch game." (From LIFE 1-10-67) It is through this "touching game" that inmost feelings and desires are communicated by all parties concerned. We see from this that touch can be used to communicate. It is this sense that makes Braille usable for the blind.

THE KISS

Other forms of touch are also utilized besides the handholding described above. One of the most common is physical contact through osculation or kissing as a form of greeting, blessing or farewell.

A kiss can communicate many things and can be used in many ways. Judas used it to betray Jesus. Cleopatra used it to subdue men to do her will. We can all think of many types. Each tells its own story.

- The motherly kiss
- The sisterly kiss
- The friendly kiss
- The lover's kiss
- The sexual kiss
- The betrayal kiss
- The good-bye kiss
- The "must I" kiss

Although our culture uses the kiss in greeting, other cultures use such things as rubbing noses or the touching of foreheads.

-Affection is shown not only by the kiss but also the hug or embrace.

-The touching of another in a violent manner such as with a punch usually shows extreme antagonism. However, when done in a playful mood it might also show affection. These same feelings can be communicated through what is called "elbowing."

SMELL

Another sense, that of smell, may also be used to communicate needs, desires, feelings or just a state of being.

-Consider the use of perfume as a means of getting a girl's message across.

...A girl gets on an elevator. She is immaculately groomed. The smell of perfume and powder is enticingly strong. She is in effect communicating her desire to be noticed, admired and desired by the opposite sex. This is her need. The smell, however, may act on different people in different ways - one is attracted - another repelled - another finds it humorous - another sad. The interpretation differs for the same reasons word interpretations differ.

-The smell of various foods as they are wafted on the air tells a story all its own. There is no need to call those lying in bed when bacon is frying in the pan. It communicates the fact that breakfast is ready.

-The sense of smell informed a group of guests in a recent hotel incident of the fact that a fire had broken out. It didn't take long for action to ensue from this non-verbal message. Another similar incident happened in a store when a leak occurred in the ammonia system.

BODY MOTION

The final physical communications in this group is that of messages trans-

mitted through body motion.

-A leader of a group meeting can usually tell who the interested people are in the group by their posture. Someone once told of a study that had been made of the motions of the lower torso and legs of a group of people attending a training laboratory session. It was said that the very motions of the buttocks, legs and feet told the story of interest and involvement in the happenings.

-Even the pat of a foot can tell a story. One lady pats her foot whenever she becomes disturbed or impatient with another. Those that understand her foot message change the subject when they see the communications of her feelings.

-One rather interesting motion is that of applauding. The reason for it being so interesting lies in the manner in which people do it.

...One person may show his extreme delight of that being presented through the exuberance of his applause.

...Another person may be like the little old lady who merely touches the tips of daintily gloved hands to show her sophisticated interest.

-The carriage of a person may indicate to others how he feels. Is he troubled or is he joyful? The stooped shoulders usually indicate the former while the erect person usually is the healthy, vivacious and joyful individual. The walk of the individual usually tells a similar story.

-The habit of showing disdain by the thumbing of the nose is a communication which many times causes trouble.

-One of most widely used body motions is that of nodding one's head. This can be read by the viewer that the nodder understands the message being transmitted to

him. However, in many instances it does not mean he understands but only that he hears. There is a vast difference between the two.

—There are many other body motions which are used for communications:

- ...The open arms as an invitation of solace.
- ...The arms akimbo as the indication of self satisfaction.
- ...The kick, like one made on a flat tire, to show disgust.
- ...The crossed fingers to say in effect, "I'm not sure."
- ...The invitation to "come here" given by a finger or hand motion or by the jerk of the head.

ESTHETIC COMMUNICATIONS

Moving from the physical modes of non-verbal communications we see another perhaps more nebulous method in the arts. Here are the four main areas which are used to tell a story, project feelings, etc.:

- Music
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Dancing

In music, feelings, emotions, and even a view of life itself, are projected from the performers to the listeners by its tempo and mood. Even the choice of instruments communicates the feelings of the composers or instrumentalists.

Through music we can see change taking place in the culture of the times. From the waltz tempo to the sometimes seemingly discordant notes of such groups as the well known Beatles, the story is told of rebellion and of change.

Almost the same type of thing has happened in the field of painting. Artists of old told the story of peace as they painted their beautiful landscapes. They projected the interest in and need for religion in the great re-

ligious murals and canvasses. They projected the style of beauty which was in vogue at the time.

Today, artists are still painting landscapes, portraits and still life themes. In addition they also are telling the story of change through "pop" art, through surrealism, through "modern" art. Here artists are communicating the story of modern life through impressions rather than tangibility.

Sculpture has been given the same treatment as painting. The treatment of the subject matter is done differently today than it was many years ago. The very use of junk in forming "sculpture" today tells the story of change.

Impinging on communication through body movements, is the art of the dance. Here the performers through body gyrations can pour out their inmost feelings to the onlookers. They can portray sadness, joy, despair, hope, fear, bravery, etc. Truly this is a creative communication medium which is not understood by everyone.

SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATIONS

As our culture has moved from meeting survival needs to the point where we now are concerned with our ego needs, we have found a way to designate our place in society by the uses of symbols. These symbols communicate non-verbally something we are loathe to say verbally because we might be considered to be bragging and we dislike that tag.

Symbolic communications can be divided into two main categories:

- Religious
- Status

Religions all over the world have different signs and symbols to remind communicants of their beliefs.

- Prayer wheels and rosaries are used as non-verbal aids in the formation and incantation of prayers.
- Liturgical symbols on the paraments found in Protestant church-

es are used to tell of the religious time of the year or to keep the symbol for "The Christ" before the people.

- The Hebrews use the Ram's Horn to call the people to worship.
- The sign of the Cross tells that one is a Christian while the Star of David tells that one is a Hebrew and the colored spot on the forehead of an Indian woman tells the story of her religious connection.
- Many hand motions are used in all the religions to give blessings, benedictions, and greetings from one to another.
- Even the clothing worn by the clergy, the vestments, tell the people of their particular position in the church.

STATUS SYMBOLS

Status symbols have become a way of life for us. This is the way we say to others, "We are a little better than you" or "We have had more experience than you have had" or "We are higher in the organization (pecking order) than you are."

- One of the most status conscious groups is the military. Here we find that the cut and makeup of their uniforms, the service stripes they wear, the medals displayed across their chests, the braid on their caps and their sleeve all have the same story to tell — what their experience has been and what their place is in the organization.
- To a great extent businesses have followed the lead of the military by the appointment of offices and the giving of service pins. The type of desk, the rug on the floor, the drapes on the windows, the water jug, the number of stars on the pin all tell the same story as the military symbols.
- People carry their symbolic living over into their home life and show their affluence by the location of

their homes, the choice of their automobile, the place they purchase their clothes and the clubs they belong to.

COMMUNICATION THROUGH SIGNS

Communications through signs differ from those using symbols in the degree in which the communications are made known. Symbolic communications are more or less passive or secondary to some other function. Communications through signs is a dynamic and primary purpose of the act itself.

The two main methods of communicating through signs are:

- Mechanical
- Physical

Mechanical communications take many forms. Without them we could hardly carry on our every day life. With them we must know what they mean so that we will not get into trouble or endanger our lives or our property.

-One of the most common forms is that found in our automobiles—the horn. Here is an instrument we use to call attention to our approach so that the other person will not be injured. This same usage is found in that of the ship's fog horn or the siren in the police and fire vehicles.

-Sirens have other usages though. One of the usages that we may find of utmost importance to us as time goes on is the Civil Defense siren—a warning of impending danger from an enemy of our country.

-Signal flags displayed from the masthead of a ship are used to spell out messages while a shot across the bow is an indication to "stop."

-One form of mechanical communications that we have become accustomed to is traffic signals and lights. Without them more lives

would be lost in traffic accidents than there are now.

-We have also become dial conscious. The dials and signals on our auto, our planes, our many machines all are used to communicate how the particular piece of equipment is operating.

Physical signs are also used in our everyday lives in many ways.

-Since we use many ways of communication in the use of our cars, one of the physical signs is the hand signal for turns.

-Another sign is that found in the game of baseball. The catcher gives the sign to the pitcher as to what kind of a pitch to make.

-In battle, there are certain hand signals to tell the men when to move forward, when to spread out, when to take cover, etc.

-The handclasp is also a physical sign of greeting. It says in effect "I like you" or "We're friends." It can be a meaningful sign or it can be one that can transmit a lukewarmness of feeling from one to another.

-The spit is a physical communication in many areas of the world. Mostly it communicates disdain. If it is done in the face, as is the custom in some countries, it communicates extreme disgust. We remember the incident of Jesus' being spat upon by the crowd as a good example of this.

*EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION

One final method of non-verbal communication which needs to be mentioned is that of extrasensory perception or E.S.P. E.S.P. can be defined as an awareness of, or response to, an external event or influence, not appre-

*"Extrasensory Perception in Management," by John Mihalasky, *Advanced Management Journal*, Jul. 1967.

hended by presently known sensory means. It can be broken down into four categories:

-*Telepathy*:

Direct information passing from one person's mind to another person's mind.

-*Clairvoyance*:

Direct information passage from matter to mind.

-*Psychokinesis*:

Mind over matter.

-*Precognition*:

The direct obtaining of information of the future.

Recently articles have appeared on this subject in the *Wall Street Journal*, *International Management*, and numerous newspapers and magazines. In addition, there have been E.S.P. programs on radio and television. All of this seems to point to a gain in respectability for research in this medium of communication.

Results to date of experiments at the Newark College of Engineering, although preliminary, indicate that one area of utility for E.S.P. is in the area of better understanding the intuitive decision making process and in the assistance of selection of those with superior decision making abilities and creativeness.

SUMMARY

In retrospect, we can summarize our examination by saying that one of the most important modes of communication is that of the non-verbal variety. It is one that can be misunderstood very easily and it takes considerable skill and practice to recognize and to interpret.

Non-verbal communications are divided into four main categories:

Physical— including such things as facial expressions, touch, smell, body motions, etc.

Esthetic— including such areas as music, painting, sculpture, dancing, etc.

Symbolic— including those involved in religion and maintaining status.

Signs— including both mechanical and physical.

The physical communication area seems to be the one which gives the most trouble since we use it every day in all of our dealings with our fellow man and therefore have more chance to misread and misinterpret the various cues and clues to the true meaning being transmitted.

Although much has been written about

various aspects of this subject, there still is a great need for extensive research and testing to be done in most of the areas covered, especially in the area of extrasensory perception.

Part 2, "Barriers to Understanding," will appear in the next issue of the Journal.

COLLEGE STUDENTS WANT BUSINESS ACTION

College graduates want to work where the action is. According to a majority of 90 college students, who completed American Oil Company's summer development program, the field of business is where they feel they best can get a piece of this action.

The business interns, in a written critique to Louis H. Butterworth, general manager of employee and public relations, said it's a myth that students believe business to be unchallenging and without self-rewards. More than 60 per cent of the students indicated they plan to seek a career in business after graduation.

The interns were recruited from 40 colleges and universities across the United States. They included 30 non-technical students, between school terms of a two-year master of business administration degree, and 60 technical students generally between their junior and senior years. The technical students are studying for degrees in the sciences or engineering.

"The summer program is designed not only to improve the image of American Oil on college campuses," Butterworth said, "but also to help make all areas of business more appealing. Feedback, which we receive from letters and individual discussions with the interns, indicates the program is successful."

Some significant comments from students included: "Not only did the program help me financially, but it also gave me an insight into the organization and coordination of a large corporation," said a Louisiana Tech intern.

A student from Indiana University stated: "The program offered many opportunities to learn, especially in human relations . . . it gave me a chance to learn to work effectively with and through all types of people."

And, an intern from Iowa State University said: "I liked the informality and friendliness I didn't expect from such a large company."

Butterworth said that the summer development program was made formal in 1967 to enable students to get a well organized, objective look at American Oil — and the company at them. This year, the students worked at 14 company locations, including the Chicago General Office and the Research and Development Laboratories at Whiting, Indiana. He said:

"Their job assignments were planned, not as fill-in duties to replace regular personnel on vacation, but as challenging opportunities to perform meaningful work with lasting benefit to the company."

The executive said that one of the primary objectives of the program is to select students who will join the company upon graduation. In the past two years, about 35 per cent of the interns have subsequently accepted permanent positions with the company. Butterworth added:

"Our Company is aware of the generation gap that often exists today between college students and business managers. We look upon our summer development program as a positive step toward bridging the gap."