

# NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

*how non-verbal communications can be used in training — part 3 of 3 parts*

We've looked at and to some extent know that non-verbal communications are and some of the barriers and difficulties surrounding them. Having gone through these preliminary steps, what use can we make of this knowledge in business in general and in the area of training and development in particular? Another question which might impinge on the first one is, why try to understand this media of communications?

The second question would, of necessity, have to be answered first in order to set an objective.

Primarily, we must learn to understand non-verbal communications because they, in their multiplicity, are much used in transmitting attitudes, feelings and even messages. Being able to understand the cues and clues sent out by people may spell the difference between having a labor grievance and not having one; between recognizing a problem in the home or office and letting the problem grow; between making and losing money, etc.

There is a story told which illustrates the latter point. A man was observing an auction. As he left the warehouse he was informed he had spent \$5,900. Amazed, he remembered he had scratched his head; pulled at his ear lobe and rubbed his nose.

So we can therefore see the value of understanding non-verbal communications. We know there are barriers to this understanding and that there are reasons for these. Since we also know that misunderstandings affect the communication between and among people, how can we as trainers do two things:

1. Train people in understanding non-verbal communications?

2. Use designs involving non-verbal communications in training or development programs?

Perhaps both of these objectives can be accomplished by engaging in designs involving non-verbal communications. For example, take the instance of problems raised by first or fleeting impressions. One way to get at the problems raised by these situations could be by examining the way in which people introduce themselves to others.

## INTRODUCTION DESIGN

Ask conferees to think for two or three minutes what they'd like to tell the rest of the group about themselves. At end of time ask each person to get up from his place, walk around the group and in some manner touch each person in it (handshake, pat, hug, kiss, kick, etc.). They go to front of the group, turn completely around slowly, and only then introduce himself, giving the information he has decided upon during time for contemplation.

As the conferees are contemplating what they are going to tell about themselves, give out an assignment sheet so that each person will be assigned to watch another's introduction (Exhibit 1).

Immediately upon completion of the introductions give out a check sheet (Exhibit 2) to allow each person to express how they saw the observed conferee. Take these up silently.

Then, give out self appraisal sheet and have each person check off how they see themselves (Exhibit 3). After they have completed this sheet return the sheet on which someone else has marked their observations.

### Exhibit 1

Please pay particular attention to \_\_\_\_\_ as he or she introduces themselves.

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*Parts 1 and 2 appeared in the June and July issues of the Journal.*

This design will serve as a basis for discussing how you read non-verbal clues emanating from those you just met. It should point up that also the signals you give out may not be those that you want to expose.

The entire design utilizes non-verbal communications in introductions.

### GROUP ROLES

Non-verbal communications are of primary importance to all leaders and trainers of people in group discussions. It is only through their ability to read and interpret the silent language of groups that enables them to move the groups forward to successful conclusions.

Group members take many roles. They are briefly grouped into three main classifications:

1. **The Task Roles**—Those having to do with the job at hand such as *Initiating* new or different ideas for discussion, also proposing new or different approaches to problems: *Informing* the group by stating facts or information relating to what the group is considering, also building on suggestions made by others: *Clarifying* the situation by giving examples, restating the problems, probing for meaning and understanding of matters being discussed, etc: *Summarizing* the discussion by trying to pull together its content: *Reality Testing*—Here a participant raises questions to see if group is ready to come to a decision.
2. **The Maintenance Roles**—Those having to do more with maintaining the morale and emotional health of the group. These include such functions as *harmonizing* by relieving tension, pulling together various factions or attempting to reconcile disagreements: *Encouraging* by praising or supporting others in their contributions and extending warmth, friendship and understanding to members: *Compromising* a point of view by giving up some position or yielding when necessary for the pro-

**Exhibit 2**

Observed conferee's name \_\_\_\_\_

Please check off as best you can from the descriptive words shown below those which best describe the conferee you have been observing. Check one from each pair. Add any other appropriate terms you wish.

<input type="checkbox"/> shy <input type="checkbox"/> dominating <input type="checkbox"/> easy talker <input type="checkbox"/> self-assured <input type="checkbox"/> pessimistic <input type="checkbox"/> friendly <input type="checkbox"/> nervous <input type="checkbox"/> positive <input type="checkbox"/> forceful <input type="checkbox"/> worried <input type="checkbox"/> frank <input type="checkbox"/> sarcastic  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> outgoing <input type="checkbox"/> submissive <input type="checkbox"/> inarticulate <input type="checkbox"/> unsure of self <input type="checkbox"/> optimistic <input type="checkbox"/> unfriendly <input type="checkbox"/> relaxed <input type="checkbox"/> uncertain <input type="checkbox"/> timid <input type="checkbox"/> carefree <input type="checkbox"/> evasive <input type="checkbox"/> plain-spoken  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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gress of the group: *Gate Keeping*—helping to keep the communication channels open: *Consensus Testing*—determining to what extent the group agrees usually by making a provisional try at a solution.

3. **The Individual Roles**—Those having to do with the individual's personal ego needs. These usually have a negative effect on the group and block the group's progress. They include such things as *aggres-*

*sion* — attaching group or individuals in it; trying to take credit for others, ideas, joking in a barbed way, disagreeing in an overbearing way, etc: *Blocking* the progress of the group by acting unrelated personal experiences, rehashing topics disposed of already or resisting stubbornly: *Dominating* the group by trying to assert authority or manipulating behavior through flattery or patronizing others: *Withdrawing* by not participating or wool gathering, carrying on private

**Exhibit 3**

Now will you please check off the words which best describe *you* as you really are. (Perhaps we would all like to be - or appear - a little different than we are, but try to make accurate choices.)

<input type="checkbox"/> shy <input type="checkbox"/> dominating <input type="checkbox"/> easy talker <input type="checkbox"/> self-assured <input type="checkbox"/> pessimistic <input type="checkbox"/> friendly <input type="checkbox"/> nervous <input type="checkbox"/> positive <input type="checkbox"/> forceful <input type="checkbox"/> worried <input type="checkbox"/> frank <input type="checkbox"/> sarcastic	<input type="checkbox"/> outgoing <input type="checkbox"/> submissive <input type="checkbox"/> inarticulate <input type="checkbox"/> unsure of self <input type="checkbox"/> optimistic <input type="checkbox"/> unfriendly <input type="checkbox"/> relaxed <input type="checkbox"/> uncertain <input type="checkbox"/> timid <input type="checkbox"/> carefree <input type="checkbox"/> evasive <input type="checkbox"/> plain-spoken
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conversations, etc: *Recognition Seeker* — talking excessively or calling attention to himself by boasting, wasting time by telling funny stories, acting cynical: *Special Interest Solicitor* — uses group's time to draw attention to his own problems and concerns.

As the group members carry out their various roles in their participative developmental discussions, the trainer must be able to determine from their facial expressions, posture, tone of voice or other non-verbal clues how successfully the group is moving. To be able to do this requires study on the part of the trainer so that he will be proficient enough to interpret cues and clues.

The question is, how do you study cues and clues? One of the best ways to study these non-verbal communications is to become involved in a group, looking at your own reactions and getting feedback from the remainder of the group as to the way they saw the same actions and interactions.

**FEEDBACK DESIGN**

One way to get feedback from everyone in the group is by using a "Day's Reaction Poll" (Exhibit 4) on which each conferee must answer certain questions. These answers are then consolidated, by name, on the board (Exhibit 5) for discussion the next morning.

Here is where a conferee can see how he has read the verbal and non-verbal communication which has gone on in the group and can check the correctness of his observations by getting direct feedback from those on whom he has observed.

**LABORATORY INVOLVEMENT**

Personal development in learning to read non-verbal communications can be delved into in depth by becoming involved in a training laboratory — either of the non-structured "T" Group type or the "instrumented" laboratory. In the latter, a specific instrument or task

**Exhibit 4**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

DAY'S REACTION POLL

Directions: Answer the "A" portion of the following items based on how you presently feel about today's training session. On the "B" portion of each question indicate how you believe each of the members of your group will answer the question, circling your own reply in each case. Please answer individually without consulting other members of the group.

- 1. A. Did you strongly disagree with any of the concepts and ideas presented by the trainer(s)? (Circle your reply opposite your number below.)
- B. How do you believe the other members of your group will answer this question?

<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	___	___	8	___	___
2	___	___	9	___	___
3	___	___	10	___	___
4	___	___	11	___	___
5	___	___	12	___	___
6	___	___	13	___	___
7	___	___	14	___	___

- 2. A. Did the trainer(s) confuse or "lose" you at any time? (Circle your reply opposite your number below.)
- B. How do you believe the other members of your group will answer this question?

<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	___	___	8	___	___
2	___	___	9	___	___
3	___	___	10	___	___
4	___	___	11	___	___
	___	___	12	___	___
	___	___	13	___	___
	___	___	14	___	___

- 8. A. Did you strongly disagree with the position taken by any of the other members of your group?
- B. How do you believe the other members of your group will answer this question?

<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	___	___	8	___	___
2	___	___	9	___	___
3	___	___	10	___	___
4	___	___	11	___	___
5	___	___	12	___	___
6	___	___	13	___	___
7	___	___	14	___	___

- 9. A. Did the performance of your group as a whole displease you at any time?
- B. How do you believe the other members of your group will answer this question?

<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Conferee</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1	___	___	8	___	___
2	___	___	9	___	___
3	___	___	10	___	___
4	___	___	11	___	___
5	___	___	12	___	___
6	___	___	13	___	___
7	___	___	14	___	___

10. Comments

