

**By V Pradeep Kumar**



Whether someone is a successful sales person or not, is generally reflected on the face and in his body language. A bright, cheerful person with high energy levels is more likely to be a good sales person rather than someone else. Why is it so?

### **Reasons why body language is important**

Customers form 90 per cent of their opinion about you in the first 90 seconds of the meeting.

Psychologists say that face is the index of the mind and selling is also a mind game. The other body movement support or complements the index of the mind. A weak or faulty body language negates the positive work of the mind and sends wrong signals to the customer, leading to wrong interpretations and thereby creating a barrier in the sales process.

### **Common blunders to avoid:**

A good sales person should generally have high confidence and belief in his organisation, the product and finally himself and wrong body language signifies the opposite. n The weak walk: These days, a decision maker can watch a sales person, even before he meets him. For example, a customer can easily watch through CCTV or the glass in the cabins and, judge the sales person even before the meeting. Do not walk lazily, with a tired look on the face to the customer's cabin. As a sales person, you should be a picture of high energy levels demonstrated by your walking style.

The inappropriate handshake: The worst blunder is to have a body language opposite to what you intend to communicate. Can you imagine a confident and aggressive sales person with a cold and clammy handshake called the dead fish handshake? Some over smart sales people some times use both their hands, their left hand clasping the right hand of the customer. Some times this has the opposite of the intended effect, with the customer getting wary and suspicious of the sales person, just as people feel about the politicians.

Also, many sales people make a wrong judgment and use an inappropriate handshake with customers of the opposite sex.

Inappropriate position: As a good sales person, it may be necessary to ask the client before choosing your seat.

Some sales persons might choose themselves and take up the corner position or take up the cooperative position (next to the client) which is inappropriate especially if it is the first meeting. Such positions can be very intimidating with new customers.

The tension on the face:As a sales person you may be undergoing sales pressure.

The face shouldn't reveal this, as it can lead to several damaging interpretations by the customer such as lack of confidence in your product or your desperate need for a sale. Similarly, avoid frowning or raising your eyebrows etc.

The wrong gestures: It's common for sales people to overstate product features and exaggerate benefits. The extent of this dishonesty in the subconscious mind of the sales person can create several non-verbal body reactions of the hand moving over the mouth, nose, eyes and the ears. A common reaction is the hand covering the mouth and the thumb on the cheek. Some sales people try to cover this up subconsciously at the last minute by lightly stroking the nose. In some female sales persons, this might appear as light and gentle strokes around the mouth or nose area as if to adjust the make up but an expert reader of body language will interpret this as a sophisticated maneuver covering up a dishonest communication.

There is also the eye rub reaction which is a natural reaction to avoid seeing the customer's face after an exaggerated statement of product benefits. An extreme reaction would be 'looking away' from the customer. In fact, people generally tend to look to their right, after lying. Similarly, when customers dodge the sales person for long, the frustration in the sales person might make him to rub his collar or pull his collar away which is an interpretation that he is caught lying.

All these gestures are a natural outcome of lying or dishonest sales presentation and to be successful, sharpen your selling skills and avoid selling by lying. If you are otherwise selling clean and have a wrong body language, it's necessary to correct it.

### **The crossed legs:**

If you have a crossed legs or locked ankle position in a meeting this is also an interpretation of a defensive or a negative attitude and is counterproductive to your efforts towards making an effective sales call.

### **Strong signals of a good body language**

**Picture of confidence:** Be a picture of confidence not just on sales calls but also in general to develop a natural body language. Maintain high physical and mental energy levels.

**Easy, comfortable gestures:** Develop easy and comfortable physical gestures.

**Learn to read BL:** Learn to read body language of the customer with a keen sense of observation. Be careful not to miss buying signals as well as not to use closing techniques, when the customer is not ready.

**Progress in the position:** Understand that there are different seating options in front of the customer and each of them has its own significance. It's a good idea to progress from competitive (opposite to customer), to corner and finally if possible to cooperative position (next to customer).

**Coordinate verbal and non verbal communication:** Let the body speak the language of the mind. Avoid doing the contrary

**Smile and sense of humour:** Try and develop a natural smile- a must for a sales person. A sense of humor is critical and handy in a sales process.

### Developing body language

**Develop a keen sense of observation:** It is very critical to develop a keen sense of observation of surroundings, and body language of the customer in front of you to know his mind. Some times, customers are ready to buy or sign a sales order as indicated by positive body language but a sales person might miss the non verbal buying signals.

**Study video recordings:** Most organisations provide video recordings of 'mock sales calls' which is a good way to understand and eliminate weak body movements and learn the way to coordinate verbal and non verbal communication. Here it is as important to learn your body language as well as those of your colleagues.

**Books, videos and training:** Take advantage of available material on body language through books, articles and videos. Look for specialists who might be available to provide training on this relatively new subject.

**Practice, practice and practice:** There is no alternative to work hard and practice, which should be a continuous process. Also, body language is important not only in a personal meeting, it is equally relevant while communicating on the phone.

Good body language helps by eliminating the complications in a sales process due to a poor body language and reinforces visually our thought process. The result is an increase in strike rate and faster closes.

This in turn increases the confidence level of the sales person and thereby further refinement of the body language. Body language as a non verbal means of communication has gained importance in recent decades due to several barriers imposed by physical, cultural and social barriers to get personal meetings and hence the need to develop good body language to complement the sales process.

The most important thing to recognise is that communication is important in any human interaction not just in the sales process.

Many people have wrong coordination of the body and the mind and added to this, wrong tone and tenor of verbal communication. Therefore the art of verbal and non verbal communication and the process of refining oneself while being critical for a sales person are also universally important.

### **About the author**

V.Pradeep Kumar is a publishing and media expert, and a management consultant with diverse local and international experience.

Mr. Kumar holds an MBA [1980] and has strong cross functional knowledge and skills, both strategic and hands on leadership. He has got experience in the arena of both start ups and established operations, with balance of people and task orientation.

After starting the southern operations of Tata Infomedia Ltd, as General Manager [south], in 1993, Mr. Kumar is credited with the successful launch of Tata Press Yellow Pages in southern India. He was part of senior management responsible for diversification of the company into several B2B and B2C magazines such as Overdrive, Better Photography, AV Max, Search and

so on.

From 2003 till 2009, Mr. Kumar headed Hawk Media LLC, Dubai, UAE and was responsible for the resurrection of the brand, 'Hawk'.

After 30 years of distinguished corporate experience, he is now based at Bangalore focusing on management consultancy and training services.

Mr. Kumar is also a prominent writer on leadership, management, economy and education. His first book, 'Simple is difficult' was published in 2009 and he is currently working on several new book projects.

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