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Nonverbal communication matters

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Tip #6: Things to be aware of when having the crucial conversation: In-person versus remote with camera matters

Much of our focus over the past few months has been on how to enhance dialogue during a compliance conversation. We have spent time on verbal signals and words that can improve effectiveness. However, there is another component to conversation: nonverbal communication. Nonverbal cues during conversations matter because these signals tell a visual story of the conversation. Cues are signals that conversation participants absorb through seeing your nonverbal expressions and/or body language. This happens during in-person discussions as well as conversations held virtually through a computer screen.

According to Vanessa Van Edwards in her book *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication*, you can have the best content in the world, but if it is not shared with the right charisma cues, it doesn't land.^[1] Cues for warmth, charisma, and competence are nonverbal signals that can increase the confidence your conversation partner has in you. Similarly, there are also nonverbal communications that can decrease affinity and confidence. We must navigate both in-person and virtual communication venues, so paying attention to nonverbal communication is critical to a successful conversation. Building warmth, competence, and charisma cues with your conversation participant can enhance the flow of dialogue.

Examples of inviting nonverbal communication cues included tilting your head, nodding, and raising your eyebrows in agreement. Charisma cues can be incorporated into the conversation by leaning in toward the person you are speaking with or the computer screen and focusing on facing the person directly when speaking in person or on the screen if virtual. Lastly, competence cues are another form of nonverbal communication and include actions like displaying your palms when explaining something or making a steeple out of your fingers. Be wary of your facial expressions, however. Attempt to consciously avoid pursing your lips or looking away from the person you are having a conversation with, whether in person or virtually. Those can destroy dialogue no matter what words are being said.^[2]

I encourage you to try the warmth, charisma, and competence cues in the mirror when practicing for a conversation. If you use those, you should see an increase in connection with your conversation partners. It can only enhance the quality of the dialogue and the free flow of information, which is what you are seeking during a compliance conversation.

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