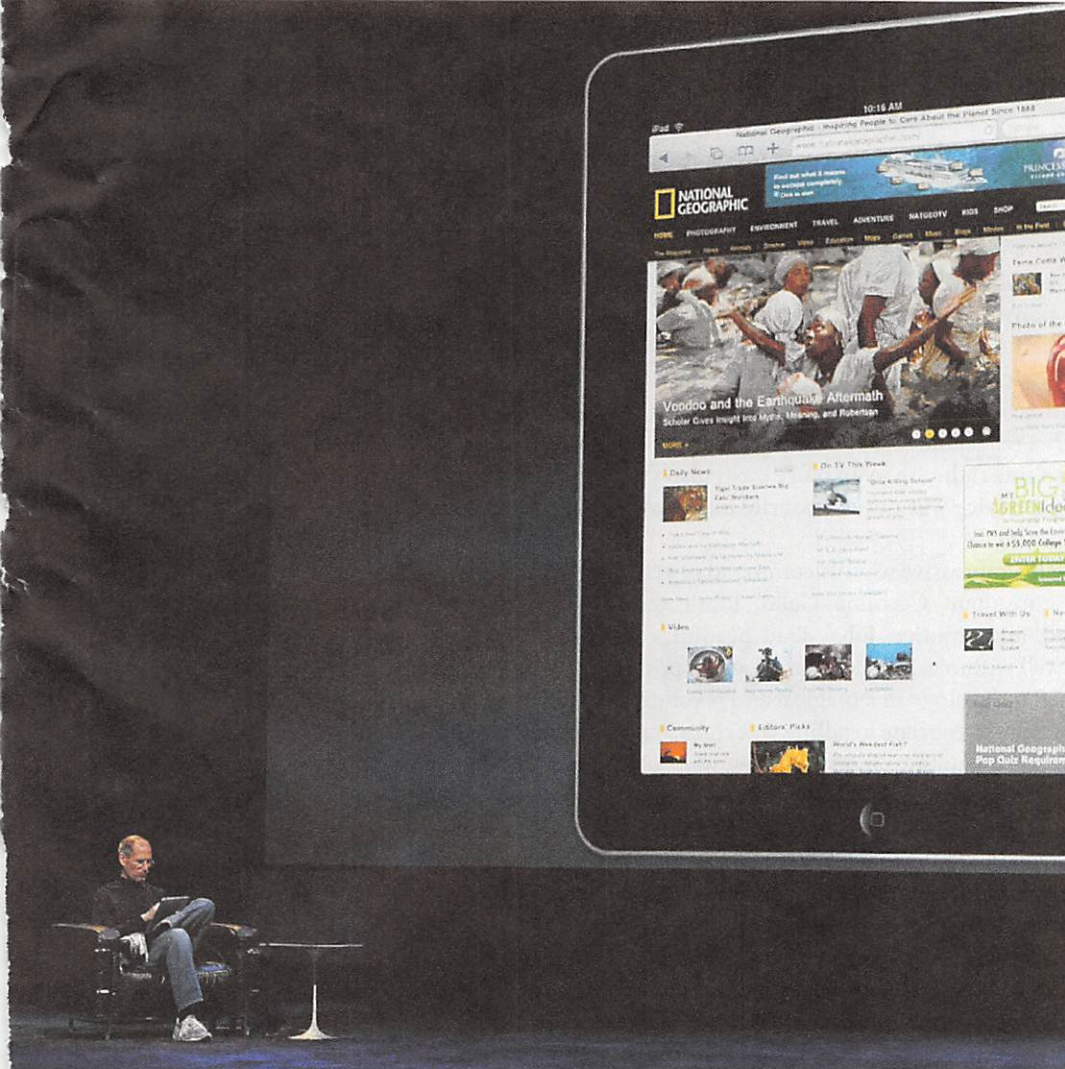


3

Using Verbal and Nonverbal Messages



chapter outline

- Communicating Clear Verbal Messages 49
- Communicating Supportive Verbal Messages 53
- Communicating with Text Messages 55
- Understanding Nonverbal Messages 56
- Using and Interpreting Nonverbal Messages 59
- Managing Sexually Harassing Messages at Work 65

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- Explain the difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of a word.
- Differentiate the three aspects of communicating clear verbal messages: being concrete, being concise, and being relevant. Give an example of each.
- Implement the six strategies for supportive communication.
- Describe and implement the guidelines for effective use of text messages.
- List and describe the six functions of nonverbal communication.
- Explain and give examples of eight strategies for using nonverbal messages to enhance leadership.
- Differentiate between quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment.
- Describe several ways to avoid or respond to sexual harassment in the workplace.

The late Steve Jobs, mastermind of Apple, understood the power of verbal and nonverbal messages. His command of nonverbal messages was obvious when he first introduced the iPad to the media on January 27, 2010. Rather than standing in front of the audience, Jobs sat comfortably on a sofa with the iPad in hand to demonstrate how this new technology allows people to flip casually through a magazine or book while relaxing on the sofa watching television. Jobs sitting on a sofa rather than an office chair also signaled to potential customers that this particular device was not necessarily intended for the office and work, but for home and pleasure.

Equally impressive was his command of verbal messages. According to communication consultant Carmine Gallo, Jobs's verbal messages were Twitter-friendly, chunked, and emotive. Jobs's iPad headlines were descriptive, tangible, and short, fitting well within a 140-character Twitter post. Jobs describes the iPad as "our most advanced technology in a magical and revolutionary device at an unbelievable price." The Twitter-appropriate headline was consistently used across all marketing channels including presentations, press releases, websites, and advertisements.

According to Gallo, Jobs's verbal messages were chunked in threes, which is consistent with cognitive neuroscientific findings that humans process and remember three chunks of information at a time. Jobs mentioned during his iPad presentation that Apple gets its revenue from three product lines: iPhones, iPods, and Macs; and that Apple has three competitors in the mobile devices category: Nokia, Samsung, and Sony.

Jobs's verbal messages also included emotional language rather than cold technojargon. For example, he mentioned in his iPad presentation that, "It's so much more intimate than a laptop and so much more capable than a SmartPhone," "It's the best browsing experience you've ever had," "It's a dream to type on," and "It's a screamer" (describing the A4, Apple-designed chip).

Taken together, Jobs's verbal and nonverbal messages complemented each other and created a casual and comfortable conversation that appeared to be between two people rather than a presentation to millions. His careful use of messages allowed his presentation to be high-tech but understandable. Through his conversational and emotive messages, Steve Jobs made the iPad out to be a product that the public must own. In fact, the public purchased between 5 and 7.5 million iPads during the 2010 holidays.¹

leading questions

1. How much did Jobs's communication style affect his effectiveness as a leader? Were there other leadership attributes that you associate with Jobs? Explain.
2. What role did Jobs's use of nonverbal messages add to his effectiveness as a leader? Do you consider his casual style (sitting down) and informal dress (blue jeans) to have enhanced or detracted from his ability to lead?
3. Could other leaders adopt his communication style and be as effective? Why or why not?
4. Can you think of other corporate leaders (or just leaders) who use verbal and nonverbal messages effectively to influence others?

As a new leader, your first job will be to understand how to use and interpret messages that are appropriate for the workplace. To help enhance your leadership effectiveness, we're going to emphasize two more communication principles for leadership. Figure 3.1 illustrates where these principles fit in our model of communication principles and skills for leadership.

Principle Two: Effectively use and interpret verbal messages. **Verbal messages** are messages that use words to create meaning. Your ability to lead will depend on your ability to

terms & definitions

Verbal messages messages that use words to create meaning.

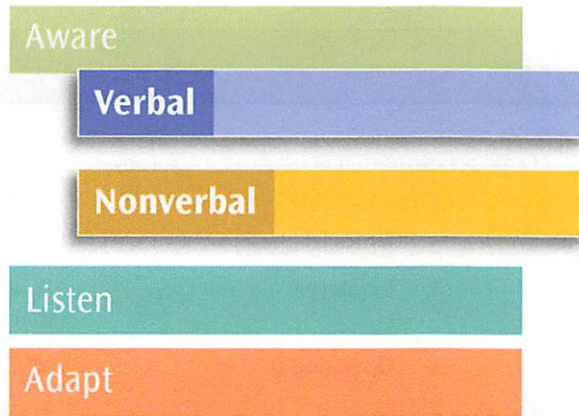


FIGURE 3.1 Communication Principles and Skills for Leadership

use and interpret verbal messages unique to your workplace. Using and interpreting verbal messages effectively will allow you to get the work done by making messages clear and supportive.

Principle Three: Effectively use and interpret nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal messages are visual and audible symbols that do not rely on words or language to create meaning. Nonverbal messages are not only visual messages, such as hand gestures and posture, but also messages that we can hear. People sigh when they're bored; they use a vocal interrupter when they want to signal to others that they would like to add something to the conversation. Using and interpreting nonverbal messages effectively will allow you to get work done by focusing on the relational aspects of messages, those communicated by such means as physical appearance, posture and movement, facial expressions and eye contact, and touch.

"Don't use words too big for the subject. Don't say 'infinitely' when you mean 'very'; otherwise you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite."

— C. S. Lewis

Communicating Clear Verbal Messages

To communicate clear messages, it's important to understand how people interpret verbal messages, both denotatively and connotatively. When we interpret the **denotative meaning** of verbal messages, we interpret the words literally; we use the dictionary's definition. When we interpret the **connotative meaning** of verbal messages, we interpret the words based on our personal experiences. To illustrate the difference between denotative and connotative interpretations, let's take a look at the word *merger*. Some people interpret *merger* literally, to mean the joining together of two or more companies or organizations. However, people who have survived a corporate merger may interpret the word based on their personal experiences; to them the word stimulates feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger and has connotations of disruption and stress brought on by layoffs or unfamiliar new routines.

To make messages clear, it's important to consider how others will interpret your verbal messages. If people receiving your verbal messages have experience with the topic you're communicating about, chances are they will interpret your message on a connotative level. If the information you're conveying is unfamiliar to others, they are more likely to interpret the message on a denotative level.

Learning how to make your verbal messages concrete, concise, and relevant are three skills that will help you make verbal messages clear.

Use Concrete Messages

A word is **concrete** if you can experience what the word refers to (the referent) with one of your senses. If you can see it, touch it, smell it, taste it, or hear it, then it's concrete. If you

terms & definitions

Nonverbal messages visual and audible symbols that do not rely on words but create meaning for the receiver.

Denotative meaning the literal or dictionary definition of a word.

Connotative meaning the interpretation of a word based on personal experiences.

Concrete referring to something you can experience with your senses.



FIGURE 3.2 Abstract-Concrete Word Continuum

cannot do these things with the referent, then the word is an abstract word. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, all words fall on a continuum from concrete to abstract.

For example, “interoffice communication” is abstract, and a “memo” is a concrete example of the process. “Professional development” is an abstract concept, whereas a “conflict-management training program” would be a concrete example of the concept. Using concrete words and phrases in the workplace helps avoid miscommunication. Being clear by using concrete words is especially important as workplaces become more diverse and international. Here are some additional ways of communicating concrete verbal messages at work.

USE SPECIFIC WORDS Specific words clarify meaning by narrowing down the discussion from a general category to a particular group within that category. For example, a district manager mentions in a meeting that she is concerned about employees’ performance, when in reality she is only concerned about sales representatives’ job performance. The “sales representative” employee group is a specific category within the larger employee group. The sales group may unfortunately miss the fact that the district manager’s message is aimed at them and thus take it less seriously. By narrowing the topic, we make our verbal messages more specific and thus more concrete and clear, reducing miscommunication.

USE PRECISE WORDS Precise words are those that most accurately express meaning; they capture shades of difference. For example, when discussing a coworker’s communication in a meeting, Armando mentioned that the coworker was too “aggressive.” To some people, aggressive communication means communication that is hostile, demanding, attacks another person personally, or pushes a sale too hard. To others, an aggressive communicator is someone who is assertive and competitive. Because there are different types of aggressive communication, it is best to be as specific as possible. In this case, Armando might do better to describe the specific aggressive behaviors that were inappropriate. For example, Armando might point out that the person in question demanded that his coworkers work around his schedule, called his coworkers “a group of slackers,” and threatened his potential clients by indicating that if they didn’t purchase a particular product from him he would drop them from the preferred customer program.

USE JARGON CAREFULLY Jargon is language used by a particular group, profession, or culture and may not be understood or used by other people. Most professional workplaces are full of jargon. When we're new on the job, it usually takes us a while to learn the new language. Part of any new employee orientation program is to teach new trainees the language of the workplace. New employees at Walt Disney World, for example, attend the Disney University where they are introduced to a new vocabulary: the language of the theater. Rather than being an employee, you're a "cast member." Uniforms are referred to as "costumes" and customers are "guests." Use of jargon helps us fit in, makes our communication faster and easier, and makes us more likable to our coworkers.

Although jargon serves a useful purpose, it can be confusing to those who are not familiar with it. Who is receiving your verbal messages? Will they understand your jargon? Many working professionals quickly internalize new jargon and vocabulary; they forget that not long ago this jargon didn't make any sense. Just as jargon can create positive identity and affiliation among those who share it, it can also create negative identity and a lack of affiliation or a feeling of exclusion among those who are not familiar with the jargon.

Use Concise Messages

A concise verbal message is brief and one from which unnecessary words and phrases have been removed. For example, assume you're an employee listening to a human resource representative explain company policy regarding the use of the Internet while on the job. He says the following in his presentation: "Although it is our policy to provide Internet access to enable employees to conduct the online communications necessary to enact their job responsibilities, the Internet should not be used for personal communications or nonbusiness-related activities." You lose interest in the message because it's too wordy. Here's a concise message that conveys the same meaning: "Use the Internet only for company business." This message is targeted, concise, and efficient. It clearly articulates the company's policy on the Internet using as few words as possible. In fact, communication researchers have identified communication efficiency or conciseness as one of the criteria used to differentiate competent from incompetent communicators.² In the U.S. workplace, where "time is money" and productivity is highly valued, concise communicators are considered more competent than long-winded and verbose communicators.³

Following are some ways you can make your verbal messages more concise:

- *Use simple words and phrases.* Rather than talking about the Health Maintenance Organization, you discuss the health plan. Instead of talking about procurement processes, you refer to it as purchasing.
- *Reduce unnecessary contextual information.* Don't discuss detailed background information leading up to the point. Instead, get to the point.
- *Communicate solutions.* The workplace is about finding and implementing solutions to problems. Many professionals don't need to know all of the people and situations that contributed to a particular problem. They're not interested in learning about the problem. They are interested in solutions to problems.

Use Relevant Messages

Relevant messages are messages that satisfy others' personal needs and goals.⁴ Much of your communication in the workplace will be instructional: Your goal will be to help others learn. Informing a coworker about a new procedure or training a group of new employees in a skill are examples of when you would want to use relevant messages. When you make messages relevant to others, you put yourself in the other person's shoes for a while and you answer the question "How does this information benefit me?" For example, effective teachers find ways of making course content immediately useful for students. Teachers' ability to use relevant messages in their teaching has been associated with a number of important instructional outcomes, such as student motivation and learning.⁵

terms & definitions

Jargon a word or phrase used by a particular group that may not be understood by members outside that group.

Relevant messages messages that others perceive to satisfy their own needs and goals.

Communication Skills FOR A Digital Age

The What, Why, and How of Microblogging

What Is Microblogging?

It's blogging using Twitter. Microblogging is a networking service that allows cell phone users and other Internet-connected devices to remain informed of activities within a particular group using 140 or fewer character message updates.⁶ A few examples of microblogging include Jetblue (@JetBlue), which carefully used microblogging to pitch reduced airfares on select flights: "JetBlue has landed on eBay. We wanted to try something different. We're auctioning off some great packages on eBay <http://jetblue.com/eBay/>."⁷ Another example is Popeyes Chicken (@PopeyesChicken), who reached out to their customer base during Hurricane Katrina: "Closed all the Popeyes in southern Louisiana so there is no need to stay. Please evacuate and BE SAFE! We'll be here when you return!"⁸

Microblogging provides a running commentary of what's going on in the organization. Text messages are uploaded to a microblogging service such as Twitter and then distributed to group members. All followers of the group are instantly notified of the microblog, enabling groups to keep tabs on one another's activities in real time.

Why Microblog?

Microblogging allows employees and customers to keep their finger on the pulse of what's going on without having to stop what they're doing unless a message is relevant. Compared to

emails, microblogging messages tend to reach a wider range of people. When the message contains a question or a request for information, microblogging casts a bigger net, allowing organizational members to collect targeted information that enhances problem solving.⁹

Applying Your Skills.¹⁰

- *Share URL links and information with readers.* Inform others of your status, and engage others in decision making and problem solving
- *Re-tweet interesting information you've read to followers by using appropriate re-tweeting etiquette.* Preface the tweet with the "RT" designation. Re-tweeting extends the conversation. It's through re-tweeting that the most important and interesting bits of news ripple more broadly through the medium.¹¹
- *Make sure tweets are relevant.* The key to effective institutional use of Twitter involves a disciplined approach of regular, relevant messages that will be of interest to the organization's clientele. It requires a commitment of resources to ensure a steady stream of interesting content over a sustained period of time.
- *Keep your online identity in line with your professional identity.* The 140-character limit imposed by Twitter should foster tight, concise statements that still reflect the voice of a professional.

Here are a few strategies for making your verbal messages more relevant to those receiving them, whether they are your superiors, subordinates, coworkers, or customers.

EXPLAIN THE USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION Instead of making the message about you and your needs, make the message about the other person's needs. For example, if your manager is reluctant to upgrade the software on your computer because of cost, use messages that inform your manager of how the upgraded software will ultimately help her reach her monthly performance goals.

USE OTHER-FOCUSED RATHER THAN SELF-FOCUSED MESSAGES Other-focused messages are receiver centered, whereas self-focused messages are source centered. Table 3.1 illustrates the two types of messages with excerpts from a sales presentation.¹² Although the content of the two types of messages in Table 3.1 is essentially the same, the messages are framed from two different perspectives. A potential customer will perceive the other-focused messages to be more relevant and may perceive a sales representative using the self-focused messages as self-absorbed and more interested in meeting his or her own personal needs than the needs of the customer.

USE FAMILIAR EXAMPLES If you're pitching a new product to a customer, make the new product relevant and familiar to the customer by comparing and contrasting the new product to an old product that the customer is currently using and is familiar with.

TABLE 3.1 Other-Focused Versus Self-Focused Messages**Self-Focused Messages**

I'm Ricardo Gonzalez from Progresso Corporation. My presentation will cover the following four points: Progresso product line, our partnering criteria, our point-of-sale promotional plans, and what we need from you.

I'd like to cover the material I have in about 25 minutes and then open it up for questions.

I'm very proud of the new Muzika2, which builds on the massive feature set of the Muzika product line. Although physical dimensions are somewhat larger, the Muzika2 includes Tortis and WAV playback support and a dedicated Optical Line-in i-Socket.

Other-Focused Messages

I'm Ricardo Gonzalez from Progresso Corporation. Let me make sure I understand your priorities for our time together. Based on our previous conversations, here's what I think you're after.

You'd like to open up the Hispanic youth market, and you see an opportunity with Progresso's products to do that.

You've said that durable MP3 players are priced out of reach for most of your market. Our durable new Muzika2 has many features of the much more expensive MP3, but at half the cost. The only real sacrifice is that the Muzika2 is a fraction larger.

Communicating Supportive Verbal Messages

Like a state or a region of the country, every workplace has a climate. Some workplace environments are supportive, meaning that there is a climate of trust, caring, and acceptance. Other workplace environments are competitive, meaning that there is a climate of hostility and mistrust. Hostile climates develop when employees are disgruntled, which often happens when two companies merge and form one larger company. This was the case when Delta Airlines merged with Northwest Airlines in 2010. Although the combined airline was financially stronger and had a larger share of the airline passenger market, the two employee groups did not trust each other because of different corporate cultures, history of labor problems, and different ways of doing business.¹³ What makes the difference in the climate of a workplace is the communication that is used in it.¹⁴ Communication scholar Jack Gibb suggests the following verbal communication strategies for creating a supportive workplace environment.¹⁵

Use Descriptive "I" Language Rather Than Evaluative "You" Language

Most people don't like to be judged or evaluated. Criticizing and name-calling obviously can create relational problems at work, but so can attempts to diagnose others' problems or win their affection with insincere praise. In fact, any form of evaluation creates a climate of defensiveness. One way to avoid



Using "I" language when evaluating another's work contributes to a supportive workplace environment.

evaluating others is to eliminate the accusatory *you* from your language. Statements such as “Your work is always late” or “You’re not a team player” attack a person’s sense of self-worth and usually lead to a defensive reaction.

Instead, use the word *I* to describe the other person’s behavior.¹⁶ For example, suppose you are working with someone you perceive to have an attitude problem. Rather than saying, “You have an attitude problem,” which will only provoke defensiveness, try describing what you see and hear the other person doing and saying. In other words, what does a “bad attitude” *look* and *sound* like? Try saying, “I see you rolling your eyes, sighing, looking away from me, and crossing your arms, which leads me to believe that you’re unhappy with me.” This type of message opens the door for conversation. “You” language is evaluative and judgmental; “I” language remains descriptive and detailed, which helps the other person see how his or her behavior is affecting you and your goals.

Solve Problems Rather Than Control Others

Most of us don’t like others’ attempts to control us. Someone who presumes to tell us what’s good for us is likely to cause us to feel defensive and not supported. We suggest you communicate from a problem orientation rather than from a controlling orientation. A *problem orientation* is an approach that views a situation as a problem that can be solved together. Leaders who use this kind of approach make requests of others; in other words, they ask others for their help and support in solving a problem, hoping that they will “buy into” the solution. A *controlling orientation* is an approach that views a situation as a problem that one person solves by telling another person what to do. Leaders who use this kind of approach make demands on others. A problem orientation would sound like this: “We have a problem and I need your help solving it.” A controlling orientation would sound like this: “There’s a problem and I need you to do this to fix it.” Again, the goal is to manage the situation without provoking defensiveness. Most people don’t like being told what to do. Instead, people prefer being a part of the solution by being asked to help.

Be Genuine Rather Than Manipulative

To be genuine means that you seek to be yourself rather than someone you’re not. It also means taking an honest interest in others and considering the uniqueness of each individual and situation. Try managing a difficult situation at work by being honest with the other person. For example, has your manager ever influenced you to work an extra shift by making you feel guilty? Have you ever been in a meeting where another person got his or her way by distracting the other group members from the real problem? Manipulation usually increases defensiveness and suspicion in others.¹⁷ When they feel as though they’ve been manipulated, people usually say, “Why didn’t he just come out and say what the problem was?” or “Why did she have to go behind our backs?” To be genuine is to be honest and upfront about problems and issues that affect the workplace.

Empathize Rather Than Detach from Others

The word **empathy** comes from the Greek word for “passion” and from a translation of the German word *Einfühlung*, meaning “to feel with.” To empathize with someone is to try to feel what he or she is feeling, rather than to simply think about or acknowledge the feelings of another person. Empathy occurs when we try putting ourselves into the other person’s shoes or try seeing a problem as he or she sees it. Rather than remaining detached, try saying, “Help me to understand the problem from your perspective.” When working through a difficult situation at work, some people say, “I don’t care. I’m not going to deal with this.” Although they may believe that this is the best way to manage the situation, what they don’t know is that these messages of detachment only cause more anger, ill feelings, and distrust. Even if what another person is saying to you feels like a personal attack, try empathizing.

terms & definitions

Empathy the emotion experienced by someone who feels what another is feeling.

RECAP

Communicating Supportive Verbal Messages

Verbal Communication Strategies	Examples
Use descriptive “I” language rather than evaluative “You” language	Instead of telling a coworker, “You’re not a team player,” say something like “I didn’t see you participating in the meeting today.”
Solve problems rather than control others	Instead of telling an employee you supervise “Don’t do that,” say, “Maybe this will work better.”
Be genuine rather than manipulative	Rather than making up an excuse about why you missed an important deadline (to get your manager to feel sorry for you), be honest with her about your mistake.
Empathize rather than detach from others	Don’t ignore or quickly end a conversation with a member of your team if you know she needs someone to listen to her.
Be flexible rather than rigid	Rather than telling someone “I’m right; you are wrong,” use more conditional language: “I may be wrong, but . . .”
Present yourself as equal rather than as superior	Ask an employee, “Can we get this done today?” rather than telling him, “I am the manager and I need you to do this now.”

Be Flexible Rather Than Rigid

Flexible people qualify their language by using **conditional statements**, which qualify what is being said and leave room for interpretations. For example, a manager for a pharmaceutical sales company says, “*In my opinion*, one of the reasons sales are down is because the sales representative lacks communication skills.” **Declarative statements** are expressed as truths and leave no room for interpretation. For example, a manager might say, “Sales are down because the sales representative lacks communication skills.” Rigid people have a tendency to use declarative statements rather than conditional statements. Do you know anyone who always has the answer to every question and the solution to every problem? This type of “always right” attitude, which is perceived as rigid and unbending, usually increases defensiveness in workplace settings.

Present Yourself as Equal Rather Than as Superior

You can anger others by letting them know that you view yourself as better than they are. You may be educated and consider yourself intelligent. However, you don’t need to announce it. In many ways, being a humble leader and presenting yourself as equal and similar rather than as superior and different will enhance your leadership effectiveness. Some people manage difficult situations at work by “pulling rank” with others; they might say, “I’m the leader and you’re not,” or “I have been here longer than you.” We feel certain that you’ve already experienced these types of messages at school and work. Superior messages showcase differences rather than similarities. To enhance supportiveness, we encourage you to present yourself as an equal to others. For example, a message that reflects equality might be “Because we are colleagues and work together every day, it’s important that we work out our differences.”

terms & definitions

Conditional statements
statements that qualify what is being said; they leave room for interpretation.

Declarative statements
statements expressed as truths that leave no room for interpretation.

Communicating with Text Messages

Texting has influenced how people use verbal messages to communicate in the workplace. In fact, many people consider texting to be a form of oral or spoken communication rather than a form of written communication.¹⁸ According to linguistic researchers, “texters write it as though they are saying it.”¹⁹



Although text messaging is already quite popular as a means of social communication in the United States, texting has become increasingly necessary for U.S. businesses that want to compete globally.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXT MESSAGES

Because texting is conducted using small and mobile communication devices (e.g., iPhones, BlackBerrys) with miniature keyboards, the technology has forced us to use verbal messages in new ways. Text messages share a number of common characteristics.²⁰

- *Text messages convey relational rather than task information.* Rather than conveying information (e.g., “Where’s the nearest Kinko’s?”), texters usually use texting to convey relational information, including friendly greetings (“How are you?”), social arrangements (“You up for dinner tonight?”), and friendship maintenance (“Are you mad at me?”).
- *Text messages are brief.* The average text message is 14 words per message, and these messages include, on average, three abbreviations.

These abbreviations or shortcuts are

becoming known in the popular culture as “textspeak.” Although developed by teenagers, textspeak is being used by adults in their texts to their colleagues at work.²¹ Most text messages don’t include proper punctuation or capitalization of letters.²²

- *Text messages are comprehensible.* Text messages are understandable and are equivalent to a note left on the filing cabinet, computer monitor, or next to the telephone. On average, text messages contain three abbreviations, which accounts for 20 percent of the content of text messages.²³

GUIDELINES FOR USING TEXT MESSAGES²⁴ Although there are numerous guidelines for using text messages, here are a few that are geared toward the workplace:

- *Don’t use text messaging to convey important information.* Put simply, don’t discuss potential layoffs using a text message. Instead, have a face-to-face conversation. Text messaging is designed for casual information.
- *Don’t text-message anything confidential, private, or potentially embarrassing.* You never know when someone might be looking over the recipient’s shoulder—or, worse, when your message might be sent to the wrong person.
- *If you text-message someone who doesn’t have your phone number, introduce yourself.* Start your message by stating who you are: “Hi—it’s Tim from work. Call me when you get a sec.”

Understanding Nonverbal Messages

It’s your first day on the job and you’re being introduced as the new leader of the team. You walk into a crowded room and notice that the only empty chair is at the front of the room. The person introducing you invites you to sit down in this chair. Although where people sit in a meeting may seem trivial, it’s quite important. The positions of chairs in a room or around a conference table send nonverbal messages that communicate power and status. Understanding the significance and power of nonverbal messages will enhance your ability to lead effectively.

RECAP

Communicating Clear Verbal Messages

Goals	Tools	Definitions	Example
Be concrete	Use specific words	Specific words clarify meaning by narrowing down the discussion from a general category to a particular group within that category.	Rather than referring to all customers, refer to the specific group of customers (e.g., preferred customers, repeat customers)
	Use precise words	Precise words are those that most accurately express meaning; they capture shades of difference.	Rather than referring to your coworker as "lazy," point out that she consistently fails to help you with the quarterly report.
	Use jargon carefully	Jargon is language that is used by a particular group, profession, or culture and may not be understood or used by other people.	Instead of directing a new employee to the CCA building, tell her the name of the building (Corporate Communication and Advertising).
Be concise	Use simple words and phrases		Instead of saying, "We're going to work on the logistics," you simply say, "We're going to plan."
	Reduce unnecessary contextual information	State the point of a message and avoid detailed background information.	At a job interview, don't tell a potential employer unnecessary details about your recent termination.
	Communicate solutions		Report the committee's findings at the meeting; avoid discussing the problem-solving methods.
Be relevant	Explain the usefulness of information	Make a message about the other person's needs.	Explain to a supervisor the financial benefits of an upgraded computer system.
	Use other-focused rather than self-focused messages		Rather than saying, "Here's what I would like to talk about," ask "What would you like to know about?"
	Use examples familiar to your intended audience.		Rather than referring to a successful leader from the past, refer to a contemporary leader.

Researchers have found that people form impressions of strangers within as few as two seconds of meeting them by observing their nonverbal messages. What's interesting is that these instant impressions rarely change, even after the two people have become better acquainted.²⁵ If you are to interpret others' nonverbal messages accurately, it's important to understand what makes nonverbal communication unique, including its characteristics and functions.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

A number of characteristics make nonverbal messages unique from verbal messages, including their ability to convey feelings, form relationships, express truth, and reveal a culture.

NONVERBAL MESSAGES CONVEY FEELINGS Social psychologist Albert Mehrabian concluded that as little as 7 percent of the emotional meaning in messages is communicated through verbal channels.²⁶ The most significant source of emotional communication is our face—according to Mehrabian’s study, it carries as much as 55 percent of the emotional meaning in messages. Vocal cues such as volume, pitch, and intensity communicate another 38 percent of the meaning. In all, 93 percent of the emotional meaning in our messages is communicated through nonverbal channels. Although these percentages do not apply to every communication situation, the results of Mehrabian’s study do illustrate the potential power of nonverbal messages in communicating emotion.²⁷ Researchers continue to find new ways to measure the impact of nonverbal messages in the communication of emotions.²⁸

NONVERBAL MESSAGES FORM RELATIONSHIPS Nonverbal messages allow us to connect with others. Whereas verbal messages convey the content of a message (*what* is being said), nonverbal messages (*how* it is said) convey or establish the nature of the relationship. Nonverbal messages tend to convey meaning about the quality of the interaction that is taking place.²⁹ For example, upon leaving a job interview, the applicant hears the interviewer saying, “Thanks for coming to the interview. I will be giving you a call.” The verbal message (*what* is said) sounds promising, and the nonverbal messages (*how* it was said) suggests that the interviewer is sincere and will probably be calling soon to extend the job offer: The interviewer makes direct eye contact and shakes the applicant’s hand firmly and vigorously. If the interviewer had avoided eye contact and seemed awkward or rushed, the applicant would have been right to feel doubtful that the interviewer would call.

NONVERBAL MESSAGES EXPRESS TRUTH If you want to know how people really feel or what they think about a particular topic, pay attention to their nonverbal messages. Although people try to hide their true feelings, especially at work when others may be evaluating them, feelings have a tendency to “leak out” through nonverbal messages. Nonverbal leakage cues reveal how you really feel or think about a topic or a problem. For example, a man may say, “Her comment didn’t bother me,” but you know the comment did bother this person: You saw his face drop and his posture slump when his coworker made the comment. When someone’s verbal and nonverbal messages don’t match, we have a tendency to trust the nonverbal messages.

Why do we have a tendency to believe nonverbal more than verbal messages? Research

suggests that people are not always consciously aware of their nonverbal messages. When you speak, you have a tendency to think about what you’re going to say; even if it’s just a brief statement, you encode your verbal message consciously. With nonverbal messages, there is very little, if any, conscious encoding. Nonverbal messages are more spontaneous and are conveyed by means outside of your conscious awareness. Your nonverbal messages “leak” from your body. You can slow down the leaking by becoming more aware of how you use nonverbal messages.³⁰

NONVERBAL MESSAGES ARE CULTURE BOUND The nonverbal messages that work in one culture may not work in another culture. Every culture has its own rules and standards for what is appropriate nonverbal behavior. From a simple gesture to a design



Cross-cultural communication requires cultural sensitivity. The designers of the Shanghai World Financial Center learned this the hard way.

feature in a skyscraper, culture influences how messages are interpreted. For example, in the United States the thumbs-up sign usually conveys a positive meaning; however, in the Middle East the thumbs-up sign is an obscene gesture.³¹ The Shanghai World Financial Center is a skyscraper that faced protest by the Chinese because of its design by an American architect. The original design included a small narrow opening at the peak in the form of a circular moon. The Chinese considered the design to be too similar to the rising sun depicted in the Japanese flag. A trapezoidal hole replaced the circle at the top of the tower, changing the controversial circular design.³² This example illustrates what can happen when someone (in this case, the American company) with good intentions simply misunderstands what a symbol might represent to those from another culture.

Using and Interpreting Nonverbal Messages

Your ability to use and interpret nonverbal messages effectively at work depends on your ability to recognize various sources of nonverbal messages, including physical appearance, vocal qualities, gestures, eye contact, space, use of time, touch, and the environment.

Physical Appearance

Leaders in most organizations must project a professional image through their physical appearance. Enhancing your physical appearance, so that others in the workplace perceive you as a leader, is important.

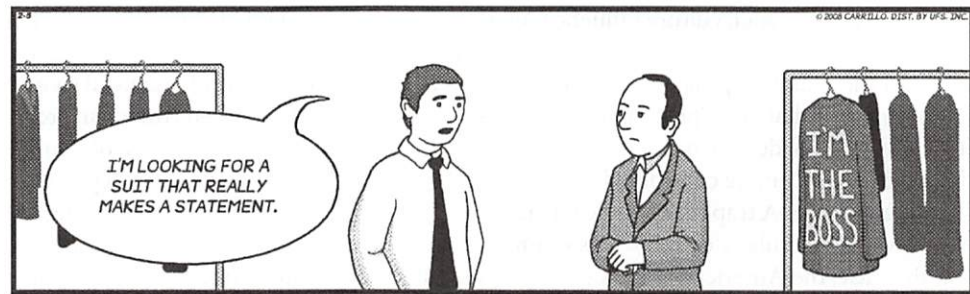
PHYSICAL ATTRACTION Our attraction to others because of their appearance—their bone structure, weight, stylishness, and grooming—is referred to as **physical attraction**. Although many people don't want to believe that physically attractive people do better on the job than physically unattractive people, research suggests otherwise. For example, over a ten-year period, attractive MBA graduates earned more than unattractive MBA graduates.³³ (Individuals were deemed “attractive” based on a set of criteria established by the research, such as symmetrical facial features, among other characteristics.) Somewhat surprisingly, in the MBA study, good looks were more of a factor in men's salaries than in women's salaries.³⁴ In another study examining tipping behavior in restaurants, researchers concluded that female (and not male) servers earned more tips on average if they were physically attractive.³⁵

Another important aspect of physical attraction, especially for men, is height. According to Henry Biller, a professor at the University of Rhode Island, “men of average or above-average height are seen as more mature, uninhibited, positive, secure, masculine, active, complete, successful, optimistic, dominant, capable, successful, and outgoing.”³⁶ Other research studies concluded that graduating college seniors who were 6 feet 2 inches tall or taller enjoyed starting salaries \$4,000 higher than seniors 5 feet 5 inches tall or under.³⁷ Although some people may be disappointed in these research findings, they allow us to become more aware of how physical appearance affects communication. The following section details some of the ways you can enhance your physical appearance and, in turn, others' perceptions of your leadership effectiveness.

CLOTHING Dressing for success has been the subject of many books, for good reason.³⁸ How we dress on the job not only conveys our personal sense of style, it also creates meaning in the minds of others.³⁹ In other words, people notice our clothing and they form impressions of us based on what we're wearing. This is one of the reasons some companies invest huge sums of money developing and designing company uniforms that communicate the appropriate image to customers.⁴⁰ It's important to dress not only in a manner appropriate for our workplace but in a manner that will lead other people to take us seriously and perceive us to be credible.

terms & definitions

Physical attraction the attraction we have toward others because of their appearance.



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Most workplaces require employees to dress in a professional manner. Professional dress is associated with a number of important variables that benefit employees, such as perceptions of increased status, competence or knowledge, trustworthiness, and the ability to influence others.⁴¹ Some organizations spell out professional dress. For example, flight attendants have to follow a rigid dress code that is detailed in a comprehensive employee handbook. There is different appropriate dress for walking through airports, boarding and deplaning passengers, and serving passengers while in flight.⁴² Other organizations leave it up to the employees to figure out what professional dress entails.

Because our physical appearance in the workplace influences our ability to lead, it's important that you pay attention to this important source of nonverbal communication. Here are a few suggestions for how to communicate a professional physical appearance at work:

- *Monitor physical appearance standards.* Observe how a number of your coworkers dress in your office, unit, or division. What type of clothing are they wearing (suits or sport coats and slacks)? How are they wearing their clothing (shirts tucked in, hanging out)? What type of shoes are they wearing (open-toed or closed, wingtips, sneakers)? How much jewelry do they wear (earrings, nose studs)? What about their hairstyles (pulled back or down, facial hair)?
- *Match the formality of your manager's appearance.* Observe your manager: If you're uncertain of appearance standards, it's always a good thing to match your manager's appearance in terms of formality. Your manager ultimately sets the standards for appearance in your work unit. Is your boss's appearance formal, or is it more relaxed?
- *Dress for the occupation.* Another appearance suggestion is to dress for the job or the occupation. Most occupations have an established standard for dress and grooming. For example, most bankers dress in dark suits, construction foremen wear jeans and steel-toed boots, and health professionals who have contact with patients wear scrubs.
- *When in doubt, dress for the job you want.* Whenever you're in doubt about how you should dress and appear in the workplace, it's best to dress for the job you would like to have one day. In other words, appear more formal than informal. A more formal appearance gives the impression that you care about your work and your organization. Appearing too informal can give the opposite impression.
- *Appear neat and well groomed.* It is assumed that we will appear neat and well groomed when we go to work. Appearing neat means wearing clothing that is clean and pressed, shoes that are clean and polished, and appropriate artifacts (for example, a belt, a briefcase). Appearing well-groomed means being bathed, making sure your hair is styled, and having fresh breath and clean fingernails.

terms & definitions

Artifact a personal object used to communicate some part of one's identity.

ARTIFACTS An **artifact** is a personal object we use to convey our identity; it's an accessory. Examples of artifacts include jewelry, eyeglasses, sunglasses, scarves, hairpieces, handbags, briefcases, and hats, to name a few. In many ways, we use artifacts to decorate the body. If used in moderation, artifacts signal to others our style and our unique sense of self.

When researchers asked recruiters to determine the appropriateness of jewelry for men and women on the job, their findings were very stereotypical and sex typed. Recruiters found three items of jewelry acceptable for women: button earrings, chain chokers, and necklaces. And although necklaces, rings, and earrings were considered acceptable for women, they were less acceptable for men.⁴³

Communication researchers John Seiter and Andrea Sandry found that job candidates with either a nose piercing or an ear piercing were perceived by interviewers as significantly less trustworthy, less sociable, and less knowledgeable than candidates not wearing any jewelry. Although a nose or an ear piercing did not significantly affect how attractive the interviewer perceived the candidate to be, a single body piercing lessened the perceived hirability of the candidate—candidates with a single body piercing were less likely to be hired.⁴⁴ Another researcher examining the effect of eyebrow piercing on employer perceptions of job candidates' hirability found a similar result, and found that neither the type of business nor the size of the organization made a difference in perceptions of hirability.⁴⁵

Voice

How many times have you heard “It’s not what you said, but how you said it that bothered me”? This common expression reveals the importance of **vocalics** (also referred to as *paralanguage*), which are the nonverbal aspects of our voice, including pitch (how high or low a speaker’s voice is), rate (how fast the person speaks), and volume (how loudly the person speaks). Verbal messages help us to “say what we mean,” whereas nonverbal messages, and especially vocalics, help us to “mean what we say.”

Researchers have documented how our use of vocalic cues influences how others perceive us. In general, Americans who speak faster and louder than average are usually perceived as more powerful, knowledgeable, confident, trustworthy, and socially attractive by other Americans.⁴⁶ Of course, there are situations when speaking fast and loud would be entirely inappropriate. We are expected to adapt our vocalics based on the situation. For example, if you were to make a sales presentation to Japanese clients whose English comprehension was limited, it would be wise to speak more slowly and perhaps more quietly.

One study found that managers who were perceived by their employees as varying their vocalic cues were more well liked than those who did not vary the pitch, volume, and rate of their voices and were perceived as being more credible and influential than managers whose vocalic cues were more monotonous or flat.⁴⁷ People who alter their vocalic cues are perceived as expressive and sociable, two perceptions that serve leaders well.⁴⁸

Gestures and Body Movement

The study of gestures and body movement is referred to as **kinesics**. In one of their most comprehensive contributions to nonverbal research, Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen classified movement and gestures according to their functions. They identified three categories of gestures that are important for leaders: emblems, illustrators, and regulators.

EMBLEMS An **emblem** is a gesture that has a direct verbal translation and may substitute for a word or phrase. If you walk into your manager’s office and he holds up an open palm without looking at you, you immediately know that your manager doesn’t want to be interrupted. If you’re giving a presentation and your supervisor holds up two fingers, you know you have two minutes to wrap up the presentation. Other common emblems that substitute for verbal messages include the time-out sign (a referee using two extended hands to form a T) and the quiet sign (placing an index finger up to the lips). Emblems are shortcuts that allow you to communicate with others, especially in situations when you cannot use verbal messages.

ILLUSTRATORS We frequently accompany a verbal message with an **illustrator** that illustrates (draws a picture) or complements the verbal message. Illustrators allow you to

terms & definitions

Vocalics the nonverbal aspects of the voice, including pitch, rate, and volume.

Kinesics the study of gestures, posture, and body movement.

Emblem a gesture that has a direct verbal translation and may substitute for a word or phrase.

Illustrator a gesture that illustrates or complements a verbal message.



An emblem is a gesture, such as a baseball umpire calling a player safe, that has a direct verbal translation and is immediately recognized by others.

clarify or intensify the meaning of the message. For example, when we are giving directions to another person, most of us use our hands to draw a picture in the air of where the other person should go. Not only does your use of illustrators help others decode and interpret your message, but illustrators also help you in encoding or developing a message.⁴⁹ Research has also suggested that our use of illustrators helps us to remember our messages. People who illustrated their verbal messages remembered 20 percent more of what they said than those who didn't illustrate, or use gestures, when communicating.⁵⁰

REGULATORS A **regulator** is a nonverbal cue that helps control the interaction and flow of communication between people. Regulators help you manage turn-taking in a conversation. When someone tries to cut you off in a conversation, you hold up a hand or give the person a raised eyebrow, which signals "Wait, I'm not finished."

When you're finished and you want the other person to speak, you give the other person a head nod, which signals his or her turn.

One type of regulator that is important in the development of quality relationships is a back channel cue. **Back channel cues** are nonverbal behaviors that signal to the other person that we are listening to them and we wish for them to continue talking. When listening to a friend, many of us will interject sounds such as "um," "uh-huh," and "hmm" to signal that we are listening and that we are interested in the conversation.⁵¹

Facial Expression and Eye Contact

Although there's a saying that some people "wear their emotions on their sleeves," they actually wear their emotions on their faces and in their eyes. In business and professional settings, it's important to monitor what your face and eyes reveal about who you are and how you're feeling.

Researchers have found that although our faces provide a great deal of information about emotions, we quickly learn to control our facial expressions.⁵² In fact, some jobs require people to mask or hide their feelings.⁵³ These employees have learned to control the facial muscles that ultimately convey their feelings. Others try to mask their feelings and are less successful; their emotions leak from their faces and eyes.

In addition to conveying your emotions, your facial expressions and eye contact also influence how others perceive you. Researchers have concluded that people who smile more often are perceived to be more intelligent than those who smile less often.⁵⁴ Also, smiling behavior has been shown to enhance sales.⁵⁵ The research examining eye contact is equally powerful. Direct eye contact has been associated with a number of positive relational qualities that are valued and rewarded in the workplace. For example, researchers have concluded that direct eye contact enhances others' perceptions of your credibility, self-esteem, and emotional control or calmness, all perceptions that enhance leadership effectiveness.⁵⁶ Use of direct eye contact allows you to be more persuasive in getting others to comply with your wishes than someone who uses evasive or indirect glances.⁵⁷ Also, increased eye contact enhances your chances of being hired for a job and perceptions of your leadership potential.⁵⁸

terms & definitions

Regulator a nonverbal cue that helps control the interaction and flow of communication between two people.

Back channel cues nonverbal cues that signal to the other person that we are listening and wish for them to continue talking.

Communicate Verbally and Nonverbally with Clarity⁵⁹

Jilly Stephens, executive director of City Harvest, based in New York City, learned that one of the most important tasks for either a leader or follower is to communicate with clarity. Whether you're the boss or not, using just the right words and being specific about what you need can make interacting with others much more effective. As Stephens explains,

It's important that you communicate clearly with people who are going to be reporting to you, that you be as open as possible about who you are, what they should know about you, what they should understand about you, and how you like to operate. Again, just be very clear about what you expect of the people who are going to be reporting to you. Meet with them regularly. Help keep them on track. Understand what it is they need to succeed. That's it.

Especially when you are in a leadership role it's important that those who report to you aren't trying to second guess what you need and want. Meeting with people often to

clarify any misunderstandings is vital for effective workplace communication

It's important to not only monitor your words to make sure that your messages mean what you intend, but also consider what you are expressing nonverbally. Stephens noted,

I remember learning that very early on in my own career the importance of having to sit and think about what I needed to let people know about me. I even said to people that I've been told that I look angry a lot of the time, and I'm usually not. It's just my face, so just don't be put off by that.

What Stephens learned was that she had to be aware of how her nonverbal messages may be undermining her verbal messages. You may use the right words and think you're being clear, but the wrong nonverbal message can contradict your verbal message. As we've noted, the listener will believe your nonverbal message more than what you say. So be clear. Both in what you say as well as the way you say it.

Space

Have you ever had a conversation with someone who stood too close to you? You slowly edged backward to add some distance, and the other person took a step forward to maintain the close distance. Rather than focusing on the conversation and what the other person was saying, you were distracted and uncomfortable. This scenario, which many people have experienced, reflects the importance of **proximity**, or the space and distance we maintain from others in our communication with them.

In his study of *proxemics*, Edward T. Hall identified four spatial zones that we unconsciously define for ourselves.⁶⁰

- **Intimate space.** Intimate space is the zone extending from 0 to 1½ feet from someone; it is reserved for only those with whom we are well acquainted, unless we're forced to stand close to another person, such as in a crowded elevator. Someone who wanted to intimidate another person might make a point to stand in that person's zone of intimate space.
- **Personal space.** Personal space is the zone that extends from 1½ to 4 feet from a person; it is our "comfort zone," where most of our conversations with family and friends occur.
- **Social space.** The zone of social space ranges from 4 to 12 feet from a person; it is reserved for most formal group interactions as well for as our professional relationships.
- **Public space.** Public space begins at 12 feet from us; it is the distance from the audience used by most speakers making public presentations.

It's important to respect others' personal space when communicating with them at work. Although you probably don't consciously recognize how you use space to communicate, chances are you do notice when others violate your personal space or when they penetrate your intimate space (also known as your *body-buffer zone*).⁶¹ Research clearly suggests that when you invade another person's personal space, the other person notices that you're too close, and this usually causes the person to perceive you less favorably.⁶²

terms & definitions

Proximity the physical space and distance that we maintain in our communication with others.

Culture also determines how we use space in our communication with others. For example, South Americans, Southern and Eastern Europeans, and Arabs communicate at closer distances than Asians, Northern Europeans, and North Americans, who require more conversational distance when communicating.⁶³ For these reasons, remaining respectful of others' use of space is important. Here are some behaviors to help you effectively interpret nonverbal proxemic cues in a diverse workplace environment:

- Increase distance. You will want to increase the distance between you and another person if you see the person stepping away from you, leaning back, crossing his or her arms, turning to the side, or failing to make direct eye contact.
- Decrease distance. You will want to decrease the distance between you and another person if you see the person stepping toward you, leaning forward, turning his or her body so that it directly faces yours, or making direct eye contact.

Time

Chronemics is the study of how people use and structure time. In U.S. workplaces, “time is money,” and most working professionals take time seriously. Researchers have concluded that people pay attention to how coworkers use time on the job. In a study of administrative assistants, researchers found that people who arrived on time for appointments were perceived more positively than people who were late and even people who were early. On-time arrivers were perceived as being more knowledgeable, composed, and friendly than late or early arrivers.⁶⁴ Researchers have also found that leaving work before the boss does conveys the message that a person is not dedicated to work, and such people are often overlooked for promotions.⁶⁵

At times, we are in control of our time. We sit down and plan our work; we develop a work schedule. At other times, time is in control of us—as when we have to drop everything to meet a deadline at work. Put simply, we use time and are used by time differently. Anthropologist Edward Hall studied how people use time.⁶⁶ For example, a manager who schedules a staff meeting for 1 P.M. and begins the staff meeting exactly at 1 P.M. is a manager who has a *displaced point pattern*. This type of person uses time in a precise manner. Other people have a *diffused point pattern* and use and structure time in an approximate manner. A manager who schedules a staff meeting for 1 o'clock and begins the staff meeting at 1:15 is someone who has a diffused point pattern. Working professionals quickly learn about their coworkers' patterns in use of time. This knowledge then guides them in how they work.

Touch

The study of how human touch communicates is referred to as **haptics**. Touch is the most misunderstood source of nonverbal behavior.⁶⁷ You can probably remember a situation when someone touched you and you walked away confused, wondering what the touch meant. There are a variety of reasons why people use and interpret touch differently. Some of these reasons are based in personalities.⁶⁸ Some people simply have a tendency to communicate using a lot of touching—it's a part of who they are, their personalities. They hug when saying hello or goodbye and they put their arm around others while communicating. Other people are more **touch avoidant**, which is the tendency generally to avoid touch in interpersonal interactions.⁶⁹ People with high touch avoidance have a tendency not to touch others when communicating and prefer not to be touched by others.

Culture also affects how touch is used to communicate with others. For example, certain cultures are **high-contact cultures**, which means that touching is quite commonplace.⁷⁰ In European and Middle Eastern cultures, men kiss each other on the cheek as a greeting. Other cultures are **low-contact cultures**, in which touching is uncommon. In some Asian cultures, touching as a way to show affection is rare and is considered inappropriate.⁷¹

Because touch is often misunderstood, we recommend that leaders limit their touching to what is referred to as *social/polite touch*. This type of touch is used to acknowledge the

terms & definitions

Chronemics the study of how people use and structure time.

Haptics the study of how we communicate through touch.

Touch avoidant the tendency to avoid touch in interpersonal interactions.

High-contact culture a culture in which touching is seen as commonplace and appropriate.

Low-contact culture a culture in which touching is uncommon.

presence of another person. An example would be a handshake when greeting someone.

Physical Environment

Your physical environment—the actual space that you work in—influences not only how others perceive you but also how you interact with others. In many organizations, physical environment is used to convey status. **Status** is an individual's importance and prestige. To communicate effectively and appropriately in professional settings, it's important to acknowledge status symbols. People in power assume you know that they have status. If you remain uncertain of who has status and power in your organizations, you can begin by observing offices.

In some large corporations, men and women with the most power usually occupy the largest offices with the most windows.⁷² These offices often have floor-to-ceiling walls and a door. To gain access to the offices, you usually have to enter through an adjoining office, which is where the administrative assistant works and serves as a **gatekeeper**, a person who controls the flow of communication within an organization. The gatekeeper controls who gets in and who doesn't. In other words, the gatekeeper controls the level of privacy that the high-status person has earned. Those with the least amount of status usually occupy what has been referred to as a "cube." A **cube** is a small modular office unit that lacks floor-to-ceiling walls and a door. It includes no gatekeeper and offers minimal privacy. Cubes are usually spaced closely together to maximize office space. Some refer to these multiple modular office units as "cube farms."



Effective professional communication requires acknowledgment of an individual's power. Observing status symbols, such as this office, can help you determine who in an organization has power.

Managing Sexually Harassing Messages at Work

It is important to effectively use and interpret verbal and nonverbal messages at work, but it is equally important to know what verbal and nonverbal messages are inappropriate at work. As a leader, you need to be aware of (1) how verbal and nonverbal messages can be used to sexually harass others, and (2) how verbal and nonverbal messages can be interpreted as sexual harassment. According to Susan Webb, who runs a consulting firm that specializes in human relations issues and is editor of the *Webb Report*, a national newsletter on sexual harassment, **sexual harassment** is "deliberate and/or repeated sexual or sex-based behavior that is not welcome, not asked for, and not returned" (p. 12).⁷³ Sex-based behavior is expressed through both verbal and nonverbal messages in face-to-face communication. Sexting or sending nude photos via a cell phone is one example of mediated sex-based behavior.⁷⁴ To lead others more effectively, you need to know how sexual harassment is experienced and how to avoid sexual harassment.

Experiencing Sexual Harassment

To better understand how others experience sexual harassment, we examine three components of Webb's definition of sexual harassment.

terms & definitions

Status an individual's importance and prestige.

Gatekeeper a person who controls the flow of communication within an organization.

Cube a small, modular office unit with no door and no floor-to-ceiling walls.

Sexual harassment deliberate and/or repeated sexual or sex-based behavior that is not welcome, not asked for, and not returned.

The first step is to be able to recognize when the verbal and nonverbal messages and behaviors in question are sexual or sex-based in nature. This type of communication can be placed on a continuum from least to most severe. Examples of least severe include telling sexual jokes or making sexual innuendos, flirting, or asking someone out on a date. Examples of most severe include forced fondling, attempted or actual rape, and sexual assault.

The second step is observing that the verbal and nonverbal messages are deliberate and/or repeated. Some messages are so graphic that the first time they are conveyed, they are considered sexual harassment. Other messages are more subtle and can be considered sexual harassment only if they are repeated—for example, brushing up against someone in the break room. According to Webb, “the more severe the behavior is, the fewer times it needs to be repeated before reasonable people define it as harassment; the less severe it is, the more times it needs to be repeated” (p. 13).⁷⁵

Third, sexual harassment is not welcome, not asked for, and not returned. Webb mentions that “the less severe the behavior is, the more responsibility the receiver has to speak up; the more severe it is, the less responsibility the receiver has to speak up” (p. 14).⁷⁶ In other words, if an employee is being harassed with sexual jokes or innuendoes or is in the room when others are viewing pornography on the Internet, then it’s the employee’s responsibility to inform the others of how the behavior is affecting him or her. If the behavior is severe, such as fondling or sexual assault, then the employee should immediately discuss the situation with a supervisor, whose responsibility it is to manage the situation.

Also, there are two major classifications of sexual harassment: *quid pro quo* harassment and hostile environment harassment. **Quid pro quo sexual harassment** is actual or threatened use of rewards or punishment to gain sexual compliance from a subordinate.⁷⁷ (*Quid pro quo* is a Latin phrase that roughly translates as “something for something else.”) An example of *quid pro quo* sexual harassment in the workplace would be a manager threatening not to promote an employee unless the employee has sex with the manager. It’s sex or no promotion—something for something else. **Hostile environment sexual harassment** is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a person’s ability to perform a job or gain an education and that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment.⁷⁸ Examples of hostile environment sexual harassment in the workplace include constant use of lewd remarks and offensive language that demeans a person’s sex.

Avoiding Sexual Harassment

Once you know what sexual harassment is, it’s important to avoid it. Although most working professionals are aware of the more severe forms of sexual harassment, many are probably less aware of the more subtle forms of sexually harassing messages and behavior. Research suggests that men and women perceive sexual harassment differently. Kim Lane Scheppele, a political science and law professor at Princeton University, summarizes the male-female differences this way: “Men see the sex first and miss the coercion. Women see the coercion and miss the sex” (p. 26).⁷⁹ She points out that if sexual harassment were to occur in front of a mixed group, many of the women would call it sexual harassment and many of the men would probably call it a joke.

Debbie Dougherty, a communication researcher who studies sexual harassment, reported that

Men perceive fewer behaviors as harassing than women . . . and men perceive most harassing behavior as normal. For the most part, men do not experience as many sexual overtures as harassment as do women When males do recognize that the behavior is harassing, they may feel complimented by the experience. (p. 445)⁸⁰

The following sections present a few communication strategies for avoiding sexually harassing another person at work.

terms & definitions

Quid pro quo sexual harassment actual or threatened use of rewards or punishments to gain sexual compliance from a subordinate.

Hostile environment sexual harassment unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a person’s ability to perform a job or gain an education and that creates a hostile or intimidating environment at the workplace.

Communication Ethics @ Work

Apple Investors' Interests versus Steve Jobs' Health: Where Should the Lines Have Been Drawn?

On August 25, 2011, the late Steve Jobs resigned from his position as CEO of Apple. Although the message did not come as a surprise, his January 17, 2011 message that he was taking a medical leave of absence did surprise some investors and his communication even became an ethical issue. Jobs stated, "I will continue as CEO and be involved in major strategic decisions for the company . . . I love Apple so much and hope to be back as soon as I can. In the meantime, my family and I would deeply appreciate respect for our privacy."⁸¹

Although the news didn't come as a surprise to many investors, there was a concern about what this would mean for the future of the company. Jobs had had health problems for years but had been notoriously quiet about the specific nature of the problem. In 2004, he was treated for a form of pancreatic cancer; in 2009, he underwent a liver transplant.⁸² His weight fluctuations had become a fascination of the press, and his evasions about his weight and general well-being confused and angered Apple investors and leaders. Jerry York, a former member of Apple's board, was perhaps most vocal about his frustration. He reported that Jobs's lack of clarity "disgusted" him in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* and said he considered quitting the board in protest.⁸³ Ultimately, the controversy surrounding Steve Jobs's disclosure came down to the cold value of his company. Most employees and investors knew Jobs was sick enough to take medical leave. But how sick? And from what? His verbal messages had been unclear. They lacked

specificity and precision. Had he disclosed the diagnosis and prognosis, employees, investors, and customers would have been less anxious. Shareholders did not know whether he was leaving to undergo a procedure that might dramatically improve his health. They did not know whether he was seeking another unusual treatment. They had no idea whether he was on the verge of death. And they had no idea what would happen to Apple without Jobs at the helm.

However, Former U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Arthur Levitt said the company had disclosed enough about Steve Jobs's health.⁸⁴ Levitt, who headed the SEC in the late 1990s, claimed the severity of Jobs's cancer was well established, and the board didn't need to share more details with the public. Although publicly traded corporations need to disclose events and changes that might "materially" affect the company, the SEC does not specifically require disclosures about CEO health. So while Apple's choice of disclosure was within legal limits, the ethical consideration concerned what was best for the company.

What do you think? Did Steve Jobs disclose enough about his health to keep the company moving forward? When considering the popularity of Apple's newest products (iMac, iPod, iPad, iPhone), is the company in danger of going under without Jobs? Did Apple and Steve Jobs have an obligation to be more straightforward with the public, or was this a matter of personal privacy?

AVOID SEXUAL MESSAGES AND BEHAVIORS Sexual jokes, inappropriate touching, and sexual teasing are to be avoided. We often assume that others are like us and that they share our attitudes, beliefs, values—and our sense of humor. In the diverse workplace, this assumption is inaccurate. What one person takes as joking, another may find offensive and degrading.

AVOID SEX-BASED MESSAGES Sex-based messages are not necessarily sexual in nature but are based on the person's sex. Here are a few examples:

"This is man's work. What are you doing here?"

"You should be home having more babies."

[To a stay-at-home dad] "Why aren't you out working like other guys? You need to bring home the bacon, not raise kids."

"You're here only because of the affirmative action program."

STOP COMMUNICATING HARASSING MESSAGES ONCE INFORMED Suppose that although you do not perceive your behavior as harassment, another person clearly does, and the individual takes responsibility and informs you of how he or she feels. To ignore this information is a clear violation of sexual harassment policy. Also, remember that jokes at first may not be bothersome, but over time, jokes cease to be funny and people become uncomfortable when they have to listen to them repeatedly.

MONITOR OTHERS' NONVERBAL MESSAGES AND BEHAVIORS Although people should be upfront and inform you when they find your messages sexually harassing, not everyone can be as assertive as they need to be in certain situations. Some may feel threatened; others may not want to be pegged as being “uptight” or “not a team player.” Because of peer pressure, they may not express their discomfort. Some may even say “it doesn’t bother me.” But their nonverbal behavior reveals that they are bothered. (For example, their arms may be crossed, or they may be using an adaptor, such as tapping a foot.)

Wrap Up

Verbal and nonverbal messages are the tools of effective leadership. People in business and professional settings who use and interpret verbal and nonverbal messages effectively become leaders. Their leadership gives them the ability to influence others and to effect change in the workplace. Put simply, they make work happen.

Three sets of *verbal* communication skills will help you use and interpret verbal messages effectively.

- The first skill set focuses on making messages concrete, concise, and relevant.
- The second verbal communication skill set involves communicating supportive messages that enhance the communication climate.
- The third verbal communication skill set is aimed at communicating assertive messages—that is, making requests rather than demands.
- The use of text messages in workplace communication is effective when used appropriately, and not to convey important or personal information.

To use and interpret *nonverbal* messages effectively, it is important to understand the unique characteristics, functions, and sources of nonverbal messages.

- Nonverbal messages are unique in that they convey our feelings and emotions; they convey relational cues, which help us form relationships; they tend to be authentic and believable; and they are culture bound.
- Nonverbal messages function on a variety of levels, which means they serve a number of purposes. Nonverbal messages can be used to substitute, complement, repeat, regulate, accent, or contradict.
- The eight sources of nonverbal messages include physical appearance; vocalics; body movement, posture, and gestures; facial expressions and eye contact; use of space; use of time; touch; and physical environment.

It is essential to understand how verbal and nonverbal messages can be used in a destructive manner to sexually harass others in the workplace.

- The two types of sexual harassment in the workplace are quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment.
- Communication strategies for avoiding sexually harassing messages include refraining from using sexual or sex-based messages and behaviors, communicating harassing messages once informed, and monitoring others’ nonverbal messages and behaviors.

Reviewing Key Terms

Verbal messages 48

Nonverbal messages 49

Denotive meaning 49

Connotative meaning 49

Concrete 49

Jargon 51

Relevant messages 51

Empathy 54

Conditional statements 55

Declarative statements 55

Physical attraction 59

Artifact 60

Vocalics 61	Touch avoidant 64
Kinesics 61	High-contact culture 64
Emblem 61	Low-contact culture 64
Illustrator 61	Status 65
Regulator 62	Gatekeeper 65
Back channel cues 62	Cube 65
Proximity 63	Sexual harassment 65
Chronemics 64	Quid pro quo sexual harassment 66
Haptics 64	Hostile environment sexual harassment 66

The Principle Points

How you use verbal and nonverbal messages will influence your ability to lead others effectively. These two principles form the foundation for the study of communication and make the discipline of communication uniquely different from other academic fields of study such as psychology or sociology.

Principle Two: Effectively use and interpret verbal messages

- Verbal messages are messages that use words to create meaning for others. People interpret verbal messages in a couple of ways: denotatively and connotatively.
- Clear verbal messages are concrete, concise, and relevant.
- Supportive verbal messages are descriptive, uncontrolling, genuine, empathic, flexible, and equal.
- People interpret text messages as an oral or spoken form of communication rather than a written form of communication.
- Avoid use of sexual verbal messages such as sexual jokes and teasing and sex-based messages, such as “This is man’s work. What are you doing here?”

Principle Three: Effectively use and interpret nonverbal messages

- Nonverbal messages are visual and audible symbols that do rely on words or language to create meaning.
- Nonverbal messages convey feelings, form relationships, express truth, and reflect culture.
- The following sources of nonverbal messages influence business and professional communication: physical appearance, voice, gestures and body movement, facial expression and eye contact, space, time, touch, and physical environment.
- Avoid nonverbal messages that are a form of sexual harassment, such as inappropriate touching.

Applying Your Skills

1. For each of the following terms, provide both a denotative and connotative definition.

Word	Connotative Meaning	Denotative Meaning
Justice		
Foreign		
Environment		
Leadership		
Home		
War		
Value		
Language		

2. In this chapter, you learned that the words you use can enhance or detract from the quality of your relationships. More specifically, using descriptive “I” language rather than evaluative “you” language is helpful to prevent a defensive reaction when addressing a conflict. Think of a specific conflict in your life and recreate the conversation you had at the time using “you” language. Then recreate the same conversation using descriptive “I” language.
3. Get together with some friends at a local mall or another public location. Watch the nonverbal behavior of those around you; observe the cultural norms. Take notes and compare yours with those of your friends, identifying any similarities and differences.
4. Start a nonverbal behavior journal, and take some time every week to reflect on the nonverbal communication you use during your daily routine. Jot down some behaviors you use and what they communicate.

Now try an experiment: Choose some behaviors that you do regularly, and stop doing them for one day. For example, if you meet a friend at the same place for lunch every day, sit in a different seat or at a different table. Or, when you talk with your supervisor, make a point to shake his hand (if you don’t normally do that) or avoid looking him in the eye. Do people notice the change in your behavior? How do they react? Are they confused? Defensive? Annoyed? What accounts for the reactions?

5. Think of a leader who has been very influential in your life. This can be someone you know personally or a more widely known leader. Now, list some of the verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors this leader uses. What are the messages that are effective? How does this person communicate his or her leadership using verbal and nonverbal messages?