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Role of Body Language in Achieving Successful Negotiation

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Abstract:

Communication is a Latin word which means to share or to express. Everyone of us use communication in different ways like talking to each other, discussing among group members, reading a newspaper, thinking and even day dreaming. If you happen to smile at someone, then also you are communicating. We express ourselves not only with verbal exchange, but also with our facial expression, voice, tone, body language our feelings are expressed. Body language is one of the most important aspects of our life. We cannot imagine a human expressing without body language, especially in the business world. In business, negotiation is a term used like a splash of colors. To have a good business one should have good negotiation and to have good negotiation one should have good body language, all are interdependent. This article is mainly focusing on how good body language and good negotiation go hand in hand. Different cultures call for different body language. Therefore, way of negotiation varies from culture to culture. Good body language can result in win-win situation.

Keywords: Body language, culture, negotiation, communication, business world

1. Introduction

All types of language that take place without words are defined as nonverbal language. Language that doesn't use words takes place all the time. When we converse with others, we communicate with much more than words Body language is a nonverbal, sub-consciously generated set of body movements, postures, gestures, etc. Body language is interpreted in different ways according to the impact of different cultures. Body language is ambiguous and deep in understanding. In this modern world horizons are expanding and cultures because of globalization becoming wider. There are certain determinants of body language, for every culture like greeting, gestures, postures etc. On the basis of level of acquaintance, location, gender, age, greeting has different meaning in different cultures, thumps up, eating food, punctuality even photographing are also some of the gestures having ambiguity in nature.

There is an old saying that action speaks louder than words, which is true according to communication experts. Many people think that to be a good Negotiator you have to be a good speaker or should have excellent speaking skills, but the fact is that it is just not about what you say but also how (using facial expressions/gestures) it is said. To have successful negotiation one should have a right way of approaching. Boughton shares, "Nonverbal communication can provide a huge advantage in any negotiation." [1]

2. Definition of Body Language

Body language refers to various forms of nonverbal communication, where person may reveal clues as to some unspoken intentions or feelings through their physical behaviour. This behaviour includes facial expression, body postures, gestures, eye movement, touch and the use of space.

3. Definition of Negotiation

It is very rightly said "let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate" by John Kennedy. Negotiation is a process of discussion aimed at reaching an agreement in general, it is called as bargaining. Acc to Christopher W Moore "Negotiation is one of the most common approaches used to make decisions and manage disputes". Negotiation occurs between spouse, parents, children, managers and staff, employers and employees, professionals and clients, within and between organizations, between agencies and the public [2]. Other than these there are other reasons for people to negotiate like- To solve a problem, to make benefits, to find new avenues for handling a problem, to change perception and many more. Many people may think that to have a successful negotiation, the negotiators must master the language skills of negotiation and bargaining, to some extent, they are right.

Sally hall in her article on body language trick to improve negotiation skills mentioned that According to psychologists and a recent study from language experts Gengo, body language and non-verbal communications has a greater impact in a discussion than the actual words that you say.[3] Experimental results have led to the following equation 1: This equation does not mean, however, that

words do not matter –but that we can multiply the impact of what we say if the tone of our voice and our facial expression match with the words we use!

Total impact = 7% verbal impact + 38% vocal impact + 55 facial impact

More than 55% of messages are conveyed through nonverbal cues like gestures and posture, and studies have shown body language is a more accurate gauge of someone's true attitudes and intentions than their tone of voice or words. Studies have shown that people are 80% more likely to retain information that was communicated to them both orally and visually. [4]

Negotiation and body language goes hand in hand. To achieve successful Negotiation one should have command on the body postures and gesture. If you keep in mind few essential body languages you can have win-win situation in business world:-

4. Mirroring and Matching

Mirroring and matching is one of the most important elements of Rapport Building. It is when one person adopts posture, vocal tone, behaviour but not mimicking Aristotle himself observed that “feelings are conditions that cause us to change and alter our judgments”. If this essential element of copying the person's behaviour and postures is well taken care of it can help in negotiation and also in understanding the other mindset of other party. Matching up body language like coming forward or leaning in front, smiling at each other is symbolic of successful negotiation.

5. Hand Gestures

Nervousness and stress are generally reflected through hand gestures. One can show up a good level of confidence through right hand positions. Not only this, hands can also be used in convincing the other party. Clasping hands tightly or fidgeting shows your low confidence level.

6. Keeping pleasing personality

It is rightly said that first impression is the last impression therefore one should be pleasant and appealing when on the way of negotiation. If you are well dressed for the occasion means half battle won because at times it's not what you will say, but how you will say and believe me or not pleasing personality will keep the party engaged and connected. “The importance of how we dress is highlighted by the cliché, “Dress for success.” Clothing has been found to affect perceptions of credibility, likeability, attractiveness, and dominance, but researchers agree that clothing has the most potent effect on credibility” [4]

7. Firm Feet

when people are going for negotiation, they are well aware of their hands, face, eyes, head as they are obvious parts of the body, but feet says everything, therefore keep your feet firm on the floor so that it does not shake, bounce, tap your feet but rather keep it strong on the floor so that your confidence can be reflected which is very important for negotiation.

8. Patience and Pretence

Patience in negotiation is like a breath in body without which life cannot be imagined. If you have patience, you can victory negotiation because patience brings empathy in the behaviour. Even at any point of time, patience goes out of control, then pretence can take the baton further. Negotiation can be intense at times, so assume a relaxed body posture to help in ease. Soft spoken and non aggressive body language is complemented by patient look.

9. Eyes don't Lie

There is a saying that eyes are the windows to the soul which can be applied to effective communication also. Effective communication is the key of successful negotiation. In conversation, a person shows that he is listening by looking at the other person's eyes or face. If the other person speaks at some length, the listener will occasionally make sounds like “Hmm”, “Ummm”, or nod his head to indicate his attention. If he agrees with the speaker, he may nod or smile. If he disagrees or has some reservations, he may slant his head to one side, raise an eyebrow, and have a quizzical look.[5] If you do not maintain eye contact, it can reflect your uneasiness and lack in conviction. There are many rules related to eye contact. It is advisable to have good eye contact in order to achieve negotiation because eyes don't lie.

10. Proxemics and kinesics

“According to studies, it seems there are four main distances in American social and business relations: intimate, personal, social, and public. Intimate distance ranges from direct physical contact to a distance of about 45 centimeters; this is for people's most private relations and activities. Personal distance is about 45—80 centimeters and is most common when friends, acquaintances and relatives converse. Social distance may be anywhere from about 1.30 meters to 3 meters; people who work together, or people doing business, as well as most of those in conversation at social gatherings tend to keep a distance is farther than any of the above and is generally for speakers in public and for teachers in classrooms.” [4] Keeping this study in mind it is important for both the parties to keep their distances according to the comfort level. Both the parties should maintain and respect personal space.

11. Understanding Body Language in Negotiation

It is very important that people should understand body language, nonverbal clues, gestures, postures in order to have negotiation achieved, but at times it is difficult because single gesture is like a single word and they cannot be understood unless body gestures are

in cluster. For example, while a person's fidgeting may not mean much by itself, if that person is avoiding eye contact, holding his hands around his mouth, touching his face and fidgeting, there's a good chance he is not being totally honest.

12. Conclusion

Body language and negotiation have interdependency and this is acceptable across the globe, but the only requirement of winning over negotiation is being aware of right body language which can change with the cultural diversity when one negotiates in a certain language, it is generally advisable to use the nonverbal behavior that goes with that particular language. Observation shows that a truly bilingual person switches his body language at the same time he switches languages. This makes negotiation easier and better. Understanding right head movement, nodding, facial expressions, individuals' proximity, postures and non verbal clues depending on the cultural diversity can help in the business world to be successful.

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