

## 9 Body Language Do's and Don'ts to Help You Win in the Business World

RISMEDIA, September 13, 2010—Today's business world is more competitive than ever. As the economy continues to struggle, competition for jobs, clients, sales—you name it—continues to be tight. If you're sure you've been saying all the right things, but you still can't get ahead, author Sharon Saylor suggests you consider what you've really been saying to potential employers or customers—not just verbally, but nonverbally.

"True communication goes beyond words, and great communicators use every tool they have to deliver their message," says Saylor. "When you have control of your nonverbal language, you can communicate confidence with passion, persuasion, credibility and candor—factors that will help you soar above your competition in the business world."

Saylor offers the following nonverbal do's and don'ts that will help you win in the business world:

**Don't fill the air with *um, ah, uh, and you know*.** It is natural to pause when you speak—it gives you a chance to breathe. What's not natural is to fill the silent pause with *um, ah, uh, you know*, and other sounds. Verbal pauses are distracting and muddle what you are trying to say, because the audience sees you searching for the next words. Meaningless extra syllables or words make you look less intelligent. Your message will be more effective once you eliminate them. This may take practice.

**Don't use the fig-leaf pose.** "When you place your hands in the fig-leaf pose, your body says, 'I'm harmless,' or, 'I'm afraid,'" explains Saylor. "Not exactly the way to convey the level of confidence that a new employer might want to see in a new hire or that a client wants to see in the genius he needs to help improve his business."

**Do use hand gestures systematically.** When we use only words to convey our message, we make it necessary for our audience to pay very close attention to what we say. Using gestures systematically, especially when giving directions or teaching, makes the audience less dependent on the verbal part of the presentation. The visual reminder created by gestures allows the listener two ways to remember: auditory and visual. It thereby increases the likelihood of accurate recall.

**Don't put your hands in your pockets.** Thumbs hanging off the pockets and hands deep in both pockets say something similar to the fig leaf hand gesture, "Geez, I hope you like me." Hands deep in the pockets jingling change say one of two things, depending on context: "Geez, I'm nervous and hope you like me," or, "Geez, I'm so bored. Is this ever going to be over?"

## 9 Body Language Do's and Don'ts to Help You Win in the Business World

**Don't hide your hands behind your back.** Depending on the situation, grasping your hands behind your back can be interpreted as meaning, "Geez, I hope you like me," or, "You better fear me." Neither interpretation leaves a very good impression of you, so avoid this position altogether.

**Don't cross your arms.** This stance is most frequently understood to indicate upset or discomfort. In business, others often interpret it as, "I am not open to discussion," or, "I am annoyed."

**Do know when to put your hands on your hips.** This is a ready-to-take-action gesture. It makes most people appear bigger, because they are actually taking up more space. Yet, it is often given negative labels by others, such as meaning you are annoyed, closed, or won't listen—similar to placing your arms across your chest.

**Do remember the eyes have it.** Of all the nonverbal messages one can use, the eyes are the most expressive and really are the window to thoughts and emotions. Little or no eye contact is often thought to be associated with lying, but this is not always true. Experienced liars will look you right in the eye every time. It might also indicate lack of self-esteem or interest.

**Do stop fidgeting.** Unintentional gestures are emotional reactions or the result of the body's desire for physical comfort and are often lovingly called fidgets. Even though fidgets can calm us, those pesky, jerky movements or anxious behaviors often make others uneasy.

"When it comes to inspiring and influencing others, we can say all the right words, but if our nonverbal postures send a different message, that is what others will understand and take away," says Saylor. "True communication goes beyond words, and great communicators use every tool they have to deliver their message. When you learn to communicate not only through what you say, but also through what your body says, you can build stronger relationships, become a more influential leader, and receive enthusiastic responses from potential employers, clients and colleagues."

### About the Author

Sharon Saylor is author of *What Your Body Says (and how to master the message): Inspire, Influence, Build Trust, and Create Lasting Business Relationships*. She teaches people how to speak and present to be remembered.