

It's time for positive

CHANGE

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What is your body language saying?

April, 2016

Between Friends by Sandra Bell Lundy





















Think about all that is lost when we communicate over a screen. We miss the vocal inflections, the hand gestures, the facial expressions. Sometimes it's hard to tell if the tone of an email or a chat message is friendly or sarcastic, angry or enthusiastic.

<u>In a past blog post</u>, I cover all the ways we communicate nonverbally--through eye contact, posture, nodding, moving our hands, etc. **All these nearly imperceptible gestures make up a huge percentage of our language** (arguably 55%, according to a theory by Albert Mehrabian).

Because we communicate so frequently over our screens, clarity in communication is more important than ever. Don't assume that the recipient of your message will understand its meaning. Take the time to explain yourself, and your motives, clearly.

Take the following scenario: Your boss sends out an email that says "I need everyone to schedule a 15 minute meeting with me on Friday. Talk to Pamela to schedule an appointment."

How do you react?

On the one hand, **you might react negatively**: "Oh no, I'm not getting my raise this year." "Uh oh, what did I do wrong?" "Is the company about to let me go?"

Or, on the other hand, **you might react positively**: "Great! I've been meaning to go over some new ideas with the boss." "Oh good, we'll probably discuss my current project." "Maybe I'm finally getting that raise!"

How you react depends on a lot of factors--your mental outlook, your mood, whether or not you had a good morning.

Why leave your reaction up to chance? A better approach would have been for the boss to **outline exactly what she needed**. Or, better yet, she could have sent a personalized email to each person with whom she desired to meet. For example:

Good afternoon, Sam,

I would like to meet with you for 15 minutes at some point this Friday. My plan is to collect verbal feedback from everyone this week regarding our new client, ABC, Inc. Please schedule a time with Pamela for our meeting and come prepared to talk about your experience with ABC. Thank you,

Sheila A. Boss

In this scenario, your boss' message and motives are clear. Now, **nothing is left to speculation**. You can walk into your meeting knowing exactly what you're going to cover.

Even if you, as a leader, must deliver bad news to an employee, it's best to be transparent. For example: "I need to meet with you this Friday regarding some customer concerns with the XYZ Project. Please come prepared to go over your recent interactions with Customers A and B." It's much better to be a

clear and open communicator than to blindside someone.

The next time you're about to send out an email, pause. Read it

OVEr. Make sure your message is clear and you've covered sufficient details. And, when in doubt, use a smiley face*:)

Sincerely,

Margaret

*I'm mostly joking about this. Unless you have established a comfortable relationship with the email recipient, it's usually not a good idea to add an emoticon. <u>AskAManager.com</u> covers the etiquette of emoticons in depth.

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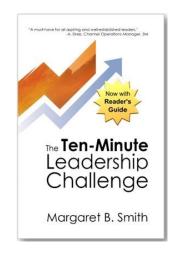
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UXL's mission is to create leaders, promote positive change, and enable businesses and individuals to transform their dreams into reality. **Margaret Smith** is a career coach, speaker, author, licensed <u>Insights Discovery practitioner</u>, and adjunct professor at St. Kate's University with 27 yrs experience as a Senior Leader for 3M. <u>Learn more about Margaret and UXL</u>.

The Ten-Minute Leadership Challenge is an instructive and interactive book meant to guide and motivate you to achieve your full leadership potential. Let this book be your constant companion as you learn useful tips and gain valuable insights to help you develop into a savvy business professional and a confident leader. Start your journey to success today. Do you have ten minutes?

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Margaret is the co-founder of the TAG teamhttp://www.tag-mn.com/, a group of accomplished coaches that guide individuals and organizations to reach their peak. She runs TAG with acclaimed coach Karen Kodzik.



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