



## Does Your Body Language Stop A Sales Presentation Before It Starts?

You can wear the most expensive business suit and still not convey confidence, approachability, and, perhaps most importantly – sincerity.

Salespeople are always looking for new ways to make the sale. What they need to do is remember that *you can't sell anything before you can sell yourself*.

People put out visual signals based on their body language. Often we are not even aware of doing so. These signals include posture, eye contact, gestures, facial expression and other factors.

An effective salesperson needs to know how to master the subtle cues of body language before he or she can be successful. Visual signals can make you appear not to be in control, and will detract from your overall presentation ... and the sale.

### Posture

Salespeople are always giving presentations – whether they know it or not. Even if it's a one-on-one meeting with a client or prospect, you are always presenting your ideas, products, or services.

Your posture is an important part of the presentation. Your objective is to be comfortable and controlled. You want your audience -- the client<s> or prospect<s> -- to see you relaxed and comfortable. This puts them at ease as well.

If you tend to sway or rock while speaking, spread your feet about 6 to 8 inches apart, parallel to each other, with toes pointed straight ahead. Flex your knees and put your weight on the balls of your feet. Standing in this position will stop any swaying or rocking motion, and reduce distracting heel movements. You can move around and return to this position, just don't pace.

Make sure you are standing up straight and facing your audience head-on. Keep your posture open with arms relaxed and hanging down at your sides. If your hands are clasped firmly in front of you, your feet are crossed and your body is tight, you are not exactly exuding confidence.

Other "don'ts" include:

- hands on hips – you look too condescending or parental
- crossed arms – you are not conveying a look that says, "Let's talk."
- hands crossed in front of you – otherwise known as the "fig leaf" stance, this makes you look weak and timid



- hands joined behind your back – this stance (the “parade rest”) makes you seem like you have no energy
- leaning back in a chair, if seated – you look like you’re ready to pass judgment
- putting your hands in your pockets – this makes you seem nervous and can result in jingling any change or keys that might be there

The effective salesperson keeps his or her hands open. Also, hold your chin raised; this gives you the aura of being in control.

## **Gestures**

Gestures are an important part of your visual picture. They are reinforcements of the words and ideas you are trying to convey. Gestures include hand, arm, and head movements.

We all know people who “talk with their hands” – in some cultures, gesticulating a great deal is the norm.

Two gestures to avoid are:

- using a pointed finger – this makes you look accusatory, even if that wasn’t your intent
- fist raising – this is perceived as hostile or threatening

The most effective gestures are spontaneous. They come from what you are thinking and feeling, and help your listeners relate to you and what you are telling them.

When giving a presentation, make sure you vary your gestures. Don’t use the same motion over and over again. Audience members will focus on the repeated gesture, and not your content. Use your palms, and open them out to your audience when gesturing. Move your arm and hand as a single unit, gesturing up and down. When gesturing, always keep your hands and gestures above your waist.

## **Eye Contact**

Any career-related manual or book will agree that one of the most important things that someone interviewing for a new job can do is to make contact with his or her interviewer.

The same is true of a salesperson giving a presentation. Even if it’s one-on-one, don’t be afraid to make eye contact. When you make eye contact, you are relating to your audience, which will help get your message across and possibly close the sale.

If you make eye contact with someone who quickly looks away, try not to directly look into that person’s eyes again. In some cultures direct eye contact is inappropriate, and some people just feel uncomfortable. If you are giving a presentation to a group of people, the eye contact should be done



in an irregular and unpredictable “Z” formation – looking at one person for three to five seconds and then moving on to the next face.

The possible problem area with eye contact is if you over do it, and start to stare. In conjunction with making eye contact, you can nod your head occasionally. This also helps connect with your listener.

## **Facial Expressions**

There are different variations on it, but the age-old maxim is true: “Your face speaks a thousand words” or “The look on your face speaks volumes.”

Be aware of your facial expressions. If possible, look at a mirror each time you are on the phone – do this for one week. Watch your face when you are talking on the phone.

Be aware of any artificial, unfriendly, or deadpan expressions you may be making. Do you squint, frown, make strange faces? Once you are aware of any expressions you may make, it will be easier to eliminate them. Practice smiling and looking pleasant. That’s how you want to look when meeting clients or prospects.

Some facial expression “don’ts” include:

- arching eyebrows – this makes you seem surprised or questioning
- frowning – your moodiness will be the only thing the other person remembers
- grimacing – your prospect will wonder where it hurts

Salespeople can learn to practice their gestures, posture, eye contact and facial expressions. Doing so can only help improve your sales performance.

The bottom line is that it doesn’t matter how exciting or innovating your sales pitch is, because your body language speaks louder than words.

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