



Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

General Communications Tips

What Signals Are You Sending?

What Signals are you Sending?

Here's a startling, but true fact: At least 55% of communication is non-verbal. Some experts say this figure can be as high as 65%. This means the way you stand, listen, speak and gesture attracts or repels an audience quicker than the actual content of the speech or presentation. Therefore, anything that you can do to improve your non-verbal communication skills will advance the success of your presentation or speech.

Be confident and poised from the minute you stand to the minute you sit down. Walk assertively as you approach the podium and as you leave for your seat. Good posture is important in helping you look confident and poised. It also keeps you from leaning on the podium for support. These actions have nothing to do with the content of your speech or presentation, but they send a very loud signal. You want everything you say and do to leave a positive impression on your audience.

What you do with you hands and feet during your speech or presentation will also send a clear signal. Whether your hands and feet move because you're nervous, don't move at all, or move to emphasize a point or idea in your speech, the audience will notice. Let your hands hang comfortably at your side, don't clasp them together either in front of or behind you, and don't grasp the sides of the podium until your knuckles turn white. From this position you'll be able to comfortably make gestures with your hands to enhance your speech.

Moving during your presentation proves that you're alive. It forces your audience to keep their eyes open and be involved in your speech. Even a change in your facial expression- a smile, a look of surprise, a lifting of an eyebrow- will assist in keeping their attention. Improving your eye contact can do more to enhance your presentation skills than any other single improvement you can make. Vocal cords may carry your message, but eyes hold your audience.

How do you use eye contact? The secret isn't equal time. It's not a matter of three seconds per person or any other length of equal time per person. Eye contact is a matter of punctuation. It's the registration of an idea, a phrase, maybe even a single word, during a continuous linking up of eyes with your audience. If you're getting a negative response from one person, eyes and head turned away, you might want to concentrate on this person for a few more thoughts, phrases or words-maybe something will strike home. If eye contact is strong and solid and the facial language is favourable, you move on. You linger long enough to sense an acknowledgement by the person you're talking to.

How do you maintain eye contact when you're really trying to concentrate on your presentation or speech? Speaking and eye contact aren't two separate actions. With a little practice and experience, one becomes part of the other. It requires having confidence in your



Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

General Communications Tips

What Signals Are You Sending?

knowledge of your material. Preparation is the key. If you're not quite sure of your speech, your eye contact will be tentative. You've got to believe in your ability to help others learn something from your presentation.

So, stop and think about the signals you're sending as you present your next speech.