

mastering nonverbal communication

Engage your prospects through varying positions of strength: superior, inferior and equal.

In past columns, we learned that if you want to get beyond just closing and to begin enrolling clients – in your solution, your product, your service or your vision of “how it should be” for them – then you must engage them. And in order to achieve that, you must first occupy the focus or attention of your client’s contact person. But how?

If you think back to my February article, “I Move. I Say. I Think.,” you will recall that only 7% of communication is verbal – i.e., what you say. This means that the real opportunities to make someone totally present for you are in your non-verbal communication skills. Your non-verbal skills are instrumental in creating rapport and in engaging people.

Because the vast majority all communication is nonverbal, this raises the question: what are you *saying* to your prospects when you aren’t actually saying anything at all? Within every interaction you have, you have an important choice to make in order to truly engage your prospect – and that choice is your mode of communication.

People communicate primarily in one of three modes: superior, equal or inferior.

We all know people who like to communicate in a superior mode – using language sprinkled with a lot of “I” and “me” and using very strong nonverbal postures and gestures, gesticulating madly or “getting in your space.” We also know people who most comfortably come from an equal mode – using “we” language and a more relaxed, non-confrontational nonverbal style, with arms at their sides, gesturing invitingly. Finally, others are more comfortable communicating from an inferior mode. This mode uses more “you” language and a much softer and more kinesthetic nonverbal pattern, possibly with one’s hands in their pockets, looking down or avoiding eye contact.

The key distinction is that any of these modes can be effective. Superior is not necessarily better and inferior is not necessarily weak. To be a master communicator, you must master all of the modes of communica-

tion, not just the one you are most comfortable with. This will allow you to be able to engage every prospect you meet, not just the ones that are similar to your style.

I came to this realization in studying the philosophy of martial arts master Bruce Lee. Bruce Lee mastered kung fu at a very early age and he was able to develop his own form of martial arts, which he felt was superior to



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the 3000-year-old tradition he had been reared in. He took a form (kung fu) that was based on fighting from and returning to a position equal to the opponent, and he expanded this to a system of acting from *superior, inferior or equal positions* – depending on the situation. Lee knew that superior is not necessarily stronger, that inferior does not always mean weaker and that equal is not a starting or beginning place but simply a posture that can be adopted in order to achieve an outcome. He was a master because of his mastery of all the possible modes, not just the one he was comfortable with.

The simple sales lesson we can all learn from Bruce Lee is this: to engage sales prospects effectively, learn first how they like to communicate and then simply communicate with them in their mode of communication. As Nelson Mandela once said:

If you talk to someone in a language they understand, it goes to their head.

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If you talk to them in their language, it goes to their heart.

Talking to prospects in “their language” means finding the mode in which they are most comfortable communicating, and then communicating with them in their mode, whether it is superior, inferior or equal.

This is very different from the traditional way of teaching nonverbal communication in sales. Typically, sales people are taught what is known as “Matching and Mirroring,” which (simply stated) means that the mannerisms that a prospect presents to you, you present back to him or her. This is not a sales strategy; this is a “Saturday Night Live” skit waiting to happen. The prospect wants to go over the details, and leans forward – and so do you? He leans back and so do you? He rises from the table and goes to the window by his desk – and so do you?

Matching and mirroring your prospects or clients without being totally present for them is farcical and won’t get you anywhere, because if you are concentrating your efforts on matching their actions, you are not being present for them.

If you want to master sales, you must master communication. Over the past year, we have set the foundation for you to become a sales master. This foundation is the most critical element of sales. It is what differentiates the 20% of people who consistently perform at an exceptional level from the 80% who do not. Without an enrollment philosophy, an outstanding mindset and dynamic communication abilities, the quest for sales mastery will be elusive.

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