



Verbal and non-verbal communication

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We learn to communicate from the first days of life. Over time, we become more and more proficient in it and begin to understand that in addition to words, much more discreet elements of communication also matter, such as body posture, facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice. Although we don't realize it, most of our lives are spent communicating with other people, so mastering the art of effective communication seems to be crucial for achieving goals, including those related to professional life.

Psychology has not established one specific definition of communication to this day. The complexity of communication processes, as well as the multitude of theories developed by various authors, mean that a person who wants to explore the subject of communication will come across at least a dozen different, often very elaborate definitions. The simplest way to accept, however, is that communication is a process in which a person uses words, signs, sounds and behaviours to convey their thoughts, emotions and beliefs to other people. Another equally simple and useful definition is that communication is the process of organizing messages to create meaning. In this sense, a message can be both words and sounds, actions and gestures with which people express themselves in relationships with others.

The process of communication consists of two basic elements, which are verbal and non-verbal communication. Many researchers have tried to answer the question of which communication - verbal or non-verbal - plays a more important role. One of the most famous experiments was conducted in the 1960s by Albert Mehrabian. The author put forward the thesis that the final reception of the message consists of 55% non-verbal communication, 38% the sound of the voice, and only 7% the content of the utterance. Although the 7-38-55 rule cannot be applied to the analysis of every communication situation without reflection due to numerous shortcomings in the design of the study, Mehrabian certainly proved that human communication is much more complicated than we think.



Verbal communication is the process of communicating using spoken language (oral communication) or written language (written communication). Each language contains its own system of meanings, as well as grammatical rules that define the rules of building an utterance. In verbal communication, there must be a speaker (sender) and a listener (receiver). Depending on whether the sender and receiver communicate face-to-face or through the media, verbal communication can be divided into direct and indirect. The nature of the communication is also important - it can be formal (e.g. a job interview, official letters) and informal.

A high level of verbal speech skills is very important in professional life. It allows you to convey messages in a way that the recipient understands. Verbal speech is also a powerful tool that allows you to make a good impression on others and influence their decisions. This fact was already pointed out by ancient philosophers teaching erudition and rhetoric.

How to improve verbal communication?

- Use language and vocabulary that is tailored to your audience - this will ensure that you will be understood by them.
- Make a plan for your speech and stick to it - planning what you want to say will help you achieve a better effect.
- Formulate clear and concise messages - long, elaborate and multi-threaded sentences are tiring for the audience and do not allow them to understand what the meaning of the statement is.
- Be an active listener - your verbal communication will be more effective if you listen carefully to your interlocutor.

An excellent definition of non-verbal communication was formulated by the American linguist Edward Sapir. It says that non-verbal communication is a sophisticated secret code that is not written down anywhere, but is understood by everyone. Non-verbal speech, i.e. communication without the use of words, allows the sender of the message to express their emotional states, intentions, expectations, attitudes and convey other important information about themselves (e.g. social status, wealth, education).



Its purpose is also to strengthen verbal messages and replace them in situations where verbal communication is impossible.

Nonverbal communication is often called body language for a reason. It consists of elements such as:

- facial expressions - e.g. smile, frowning
- gestures (pantomime) - e.g. waving hands, adjusting glasses, showing thumb as an "OK" sign
- proxemics - e.g. the arrangement of interlocutors in space, the distance between them
- paralinguistic factors - e.g. tone of voice, pace of speech, pauses in speaking
- appearance - e.g. clothing, make-up
- physiological conditions - e.g. blushing, smell
- body posture - e.g. upright posture, head raised
- the appearance of the eyes - e.g. eye contact, eye movements.

Nonverbal speech provides a huge amount of information about the sender of the message. For this reason, it is very important to be aware of how our body behaves in relationships with other people, as well as whether our body language is consistent with what we say.

How to improve nonverbal communication?

- Observe other people during communication - try to analyze what determines the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their communication.
- Work on emotional intelligence and understanding emotions - this will help you predict how others may react to what and how you say to them.
- Maintain a balance between verbal and non-verbal communication - verbal and non-verbal speech must be consistent, and non-verbal messages must not overshadow verbal ones.
- Ask others for feedback - this will help you understand what message your body is conveying to other people and you will be able to work on your body posture.



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