“*The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.*” - *Peter Drucker*

When you communicate face-to-face, people receive information through what you say verbally, how you sound vocally, and how it appears visually. The entire package must be synchronized for maximum benefit. In a study at UCLA in 1967, Dr. Albert Mehrabian found that when there are conflicts of trust and believability between the verbal (what is said), the vocal (how the voice says it) and the visual (what is seen of the speaker) the visual is overwhelmingly dominant. Research in his book *Silent Messages* shows the verbal is believed 7% of the time, the vocal 38%, and the visual 55% of the time.

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When communicating over the telephone Dr. Mehrabian's found 84% of communication is vocal and 16% is verbal.

Most people focus their preparation for communication on the verbal, whereas they should be concentrating on the visual. We must be knowledgeable of our subject matter and competent in putting together supporting data, but we know how important it is for us to pay attention to other areas of preparation. For people to believe us, we must be believable. And, in order to be believable, we must learn to look and sound credible.

**Words**

According to Dr. Mehrabian, the words you use in your message account for only 7% of your communication. This is not to say that using the right words is not important. The English language contains hundreds of thousands of words, so it is important to use the right words for the right people. Your communication objective is to select the right words that assist you in communicating your ideas clearly, effectively and vividly.

Utilizing the right words is an important step in building rapport with your audience. The most persuasive word in the English language is our first name; using a person's name in communication is the most influential thing you can do. The most persuasive phrase is “Thank You”. The other persuasive words and phrases include:

- “What do you think?”
- Results
- “Would you please...?”
- Proven

**Voice**

Dr. Albert Mehrabian found in his studies on communication, the sound of your voice accounts for 38% of your communication with the audience. Your voice might even represent your personality to some people. Different factors drive the effective use of your voice when communicating. The following are factors that affect your voice.
**Inflection** is when you raise the tone of your voice, such as going up at the end of a sentence to indicate a question.

**Volume** is the amount of fullness of your voice and can be increased or decreased by pushing more or less air over your vocal cords.

**Clarity** is the proper use of pronunciation, articulation and the expression of sounds and are key to a listener’s understanding of your message.

**Body Language** - Your body language is the most important communication factor when communicating face-to-face. You can use your stance, posture, facial expressions, hand gestures and other movements to your advantage. According to Dr. Mehrabian, 55% of your communication is represented visually with your body language. If your body and verbal contradict, your listener will believe your body language over the words you use. The use of your body language can strengthen your message, weaken it, or even contradict it. There are found factors you can develop that will improve your overall communication style.

Your **smile** is the single most important aspect of body language. You want to have a warm, sincere smile on your face when you begin your face-to-face communication. You will not get enthusiasm from people unless you initially give enthusiasm to them. You cannot receive a smile unless you give a smile first.

The **silent nod** is another powerful element of body language. Often, the nod of your head will accompany eye contact. When you look at someone for a few seconds while you are speaking, most people will Instinctively nod, signaling they are listening to you and possibly that they agree with you. A nod indicates you have made contact and are getting through. You can also use a nod as part of your body language to acknowledge people when they are speaking.

If the **eyes** are the window to the soul, you can bet that your listener will have a pretty good idea of what is going on in your head just by how much or how little you engage them with your eyes. Eye contact also serves as a means of feedback for the speaker. As you observe your listener and you see them looking down, out a window or away, you know you need to do something to capture their attention. However, if your listener is paying attention to you with eye contact even with occasional smiles, it is a good sign that you are having an effective conversation.

Your **body position** is another critical factor in making a great first impression and communicating with your listener. You can communicate sincerity and attention by using an open stance that is demonstrated by outstretched arms or hands, looking up, chest out and feet slightly apart. An open stance is welcoming and conveys trust and acceptance. On the other hand, a closed stance, represented by folded arms, hunches shoulders, legs crossed and head down looking at the floor conveys resistance, lack of acceptance and even hostility.