

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Encoding The Response

Interpersonal Communication is a method of conveying a message from one person to at least one other person. This type of oral communication comprises three components: body language, tone of voice and the words themselves. The following percentages can be debated, but some studies indicate that body language accounts for about 55% of any message, tone of voice is 35% of the message, while the words represent only the remaining 10%.

In all written communications, like this article for example, you can't see me and, therefore, body language is totally eliminated from the dynamic – cut 55%! Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to convey tone of voice. So at best, a written communication represents 10% of the potential of an interpersonal communication. Keep this in mind when considering e-mail communication.

Let's explore this profile of interpersonal communication.

The area in which I live has an extensive ravine path system that is frequented by many. In order to discover how one might influence the outcome of an interpersonal communication, I conducted a highly unscientific experiment while walking the path.

The objective was to see if I could increase the response rate of others saying "hello" to me. In Step One, I approached people without saying "hello" to them and kept my eyes averted from them. About 5% of the people offered me a "hello".

In Step Two, I again approached people without saying "hello" to them, but did make eye contact with them. In this instance, about 10% of the people offered me a "hello".

In Step Three, as I approached people, I made eye contact with them and said "hello". Over 60% responded with a "hello".

In the final step of the experiment, as I approached people, I made eye contact with them, smiled and modulated my "hello". This generated a response rate of over 90%.

I have run this experiment many times, with consistent results. The lesson here is that we have enormous influence in generating a desired response, by initiating the interpersonal communication in a deliberate manner.

When one holds a baby, we smile at the baby, look the baby in the eyes and make re-assuring noises. Our goal is to elicit a return smile from the baby. We do this encoding quite unconsciously.

To enhance the quality of your interpersonal communication, consider the following:



- ◆ What is your objective of the interaction?
- ◆ What is the desired result?
- ◆ What might be the barriers in the process?
- ◆ How might you initiate the interpersonal communication in such a way that it encourages or encodes the desired response?

Most of our interpersonal communication is conducted haphazardly on-the-fly, without pre-planning. Run a little experiment yourself -- plan out an interpersonal communication, taking the above into account. Try matching the way in which you initiate the interpersonal communication with the desired response.

This approach will take a little longer, especially when you first start practising it. As you observe the improvement in the *quality* of your conversations, though, you will conclude that it's well worth the investment.

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