

WHEN YOUR BODY SPEAKS LOUDER THAN YOU

First impressions. Everyone knows how important they are, and it is often said that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. In fact, within the first 15 seconds of meeting someone new, they have formed a lasting impression of you. Have you ever stopped to consider what created that impression, and how you can influence it in your favour?

Three little words: non verbal communication. Body language. It's the way you present yourself, shake hands, make eye contact and listen. And more. There are broadly two kinds of body language: conscious and unconscious. The former includes the gestures you make for emphasis or illustration, while the latter includes your facial expressions when listening, your posture, how close to the other person you sit or stand, and even your appearance.

Not only does cultural etiquette differ from country to country, but also here in the U.K.'s multicultural society. You should make yourself aware of how you come across. Because, even when you speak, it ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it.

Is it important to learn body language? Only if you want to be successful in doing business with all sorts of people. Non verbal communication plays a much bigger part in other cultures than for the U.K.'s indigenous population. Give out the wrong signals, or misunderstand the signals you receive, and you'll be forever wondering why those deals got away from you.

Here are 10 Top Tips for better body language:

1. Be still, whether standing or sitting. It's impressive and respectful.
2. Maintain respectful eye contact, but do not stare.
3. Smile warmly, but be careful not to seem mocking.
4. Don't interrupt. Listen attentively and give the other person space.
5. Video yourself in conversation. What are you doing with your hands?
6. Get feedback on your personal grooming and appearance.
7. Don't point or gesture with the forefinger alone. Never point the sole of your shoe at the other person.
8. Use your right hand only (the left is often considered unclean).
9. Touching: Less is more.
10. Never put your brief case or handbag on someone else's table or desk. It's probably been standing on the floor at sometime (this practice can be considered unclean).

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