

# Digital Body Language: Why How You Say It Matters More Than Ever Before

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If you've spent most or all of your career working in a physical office, then the idea of digital body language might be slightly foreign. Still, we've all been there. Did the boss' "k" in an email mean they were upset or didn't like your idea? Did a colleague's eye-roll emoji mean fleeting overwhelm or are they really upset?

As someone who's been speaking on the future of business for a while and running a remote b2b agency for over a decade, teaching and

understanding digital body language has been par for the course. Now, many of us are having to quickly learn how to work, manage, and collaborate with employees and peers without in-person contact. And that means that digital body language is more important than it's ever been before.

So, what exactly IS digital body language? Is it how you hold yourself on video calls? The emojis you use in group chats? How do you announce yourself on conference calls?

It's true that these are all components of digital body language. These components, along with all the other numerous little details of how we communicate--whether on the phone, via a messaging app like Slack, on video chat, or through email--are what create our digital body language. And our digital body language is critical for establishing and maintaining good rapport, contributing to high morale, and just generally creating a positive work environment for everyone at the company.

## **Digital body language basics: For employees**

If your workplace has transitioned to remote work as part of the coronavirus response, then digital body language is a way to maintain and build upon the connection you already have with your co-workers.

Turning on your camera during video chats, instead of sticking to voice only.

Speaking confidently and clearly on conference calls.

Meeting deadlines and showing up on time for virtual meetings.

Being friendly and present on messaging channels, without taking too much time away from work.

These are all simple, yet extremely powerful ways to convey a sense of who you are and how you work when your co-workers can't actually see you (at least, not in person).

## **Digital body language basics: For managers**

Managing employees remotely can be a struggle for even the best managers--especially those who rely on lots of face-to-face conversations in order to stay connected and "take the temperature" of their teams. One of the best ways to establish good working relationships with your remote team is to model excellent communication from the get-go.

Over-communicate, in fact--it will set a great example for your team, as over-communication is one of the keys to being successful as a remote company. This is especially true if you're suddenly transitioning from a traditional working model.

The transition will take time, and open, frequent, and effective communication is the only way to ensure that things which ordinarily would have been handled through an offhand, face-to-face conversation don't fall through the cracks.

Other ways to keep up a strong connection with your employees is to schedule time for one-on-one meetings, as well as check in with them in a low-pressure, friendly way every couple of days at least.

Remember, you can't stop by their desk to ask them how their day is going anymore. You've got to find other ways to show that you're invested in them.

### **Your tone matters**

Perhaps the most difficult thing for people who are more used to working within shouting distance of each other is nailing the right tone in instant messages, emails, texts, and other types of online written communication.

That's because a simple request to speak with an employee can send them into a cold sweat if it's not delivered in the appropriate manner. Do you simply want to see how their day is going? Make sure they know that right away--add a smiling emoji, or a waving hand, and make the casual nature of the conversation known.

For example: "Hi! I'd love to chat with you soon about how everything is going. Do you have some time to fill me in on how you're feeling?" You'll want to be even more considerate of this point in these difficult times, when so many people have already lost their jobs or experienced some loss of income. Uncertainty is everywhere, and employees may be much more ready to jump to unpleasant conclusions than they would be otherwise.

And a word on emojis: although at one point, they were used almost exclusively by text-happy teenagers, they've become an essential element of text-based communication. Everyone from the CEO on down should feel good about using them.

In a webinar I recently presented, I shared how digital body language matters now more than ever--and it will continue to for the foreseeable future. Pay attention to how you're presenting yourself online and it could mean the difference between success and failure. If you need help, [this course by Erica Dhawan](#) is a great place to start.

What are *you* saying with your digital body language?