DIGITAL BODY LANGUAGE WORKSHOP

EMAILS

- **WHO?**
  - BOSS? TEAM? CLIENT?
  - WHAT'S their WORK STYLE?
  - AVOID CASUAL SLANG
- **WHAT?**
  - BREVITY is CONFUSING
  - PRECISE & CLEAR
  - EFFECTIVE SUBJECT LINE
- **WHEN?**
  - TIMING MATTERS
  - ACKNOWLEDGE URGENT EMAILS

ZOOM CALLS

- ELEVATE YOUR LAPTOP
- CHECK YOUR BACKGROUND & LIGHTING
- SIT STRAIGHT!
- FRAME YOUR FACE
- CHECK YOUR CONNECTIVITY
- CHECK YOUR VIDEO SETTINGS BEFORE YOU START!

WHAT?
- SEND MEETING AGENDA
- ALLOW VIRTUAL RAISE HAND
- USE VISUAL AIDS!
- SLOW DOWN.
  - ADJUST to the LAG!

WHO?
- MAKE PEOPLE FEEL VALUED for THEIR PRESENCE!
- NAME YOUR ACCOUNT NAME APPROPRIATELY

WHEN?
- CONSIDER TIME ZONES
- DURATION of MEETING?

TRY TO AVOID ZOOM FATIGUE!

VIDEO FILTER

WHEN COMMUNICATING 93% IS NON-VERBAL

TONALITY 38%

BODY LANGUAGE 55%

VERBAL 7%

WHETHER IT'S TRADITIONAL or DIGITAL COMMUNICATION...

...THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE MUST be SATISFIED!

BODY LANGUAGE

VOICE TONALITY

CONTENT

THIS is WHEN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION HAPPENS!
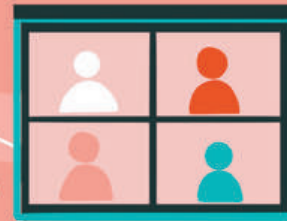
LET'S TALK ABOUT DIGITAL COMMUNICATION!

Q&A:

Q: HOW TO TELL WHEN YOU'VE LOST THEM?

WHEN they START
- FIDGETING
- ZONING OUT
- GET TOO COMFORTABLE

BEING ONLINE is NO DIFFERENT from BEING PHYSICALLY TOGETHER

Q: HOW SHOULD a GROUP of PEOPLE be ADDRESSED OVER EMAIL?

"DEAR ALL,"

IF IT'S FEWER THAN 4 PEOPLE, TYPE THEIR NAMES OUT!

Q: IS BREVITY always THE BEST WAY? SHOULD WE BE BRIEF or GIVE LOADS of INFO?

CONTEXT is EVERYTHING!

BE EXTRA CAUTIOUS of THE WORDS & CONTEXT in USE

CLARITY NEEDS to be ACHIEVED!

YOU CAN'T SEE TONE, YOU HAVE to HEAR & FEEL IT!

VOICE MESSAGING CAN HELP GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS!

SPEAKER KIKI WONG DIRECTOR AT THE SILENT COMPANY & HEAD OF FORENSICS AT THE FORENSICS COMPANY

MODERATOR LUCY COLBACK

DIGITAL BODY LANGUAGE
TUESDAY 17 MAY 2022

SPEAKER
Kiki Wong, Director, The Silent Company

HOST
Lucy Colback, Editorial Director of FT Women in Business Asia Forum

As a former forensic expert for the metropolitan police at New Scotland Yard in the UK, Kiki Wong learnt firsthand that communication is much more than about what we say and how well we speak – it's about understanding visual cues as well.

In her current role as a non-verbal communication specialist and director of a training organisation, the Silent Company in Hong Kong, Wong specialises in body language and micro facial expressions. She began this Women in Business Asia Forum session by asking participants a question: how much of our communication is non-verbal?

According to research by Prof Albert Mehrabian in the 1970s, she said, 93 per cent of our communication is non-verbal. Of that, 55 per cent is body language, and 38 per cent is voice. Only 7 per cent of communication relies on the words we use.

Effective communication is key in the workplace, but face to face contact has been reduced since the pandemic, while digital communication has increased.

Wong outlined the three fundamental features of traditional good communication, presented as a "golden triangle:

Traditional communication – The Golden Triangle

In face-to-face communication, Wong explained, you need three things to be successful:

Body language

The
Golden
Triangle

Voice, tonality   Content (words)
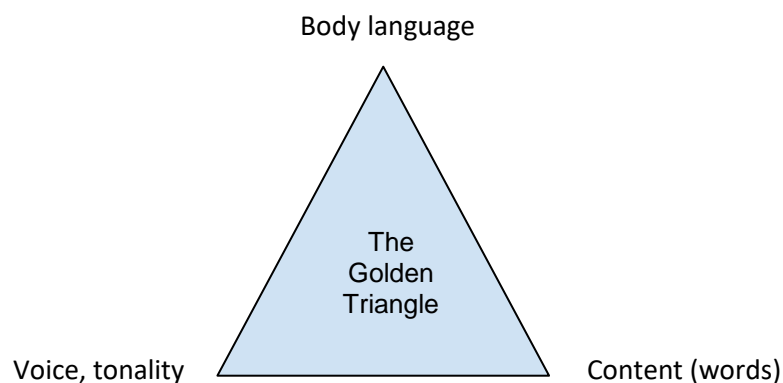
In digital communication, you have to think carefully about how you will express these three things in a virtual context.

1. **Content**
- Be careful about using slang and informal abbreviations, which may confuse the other person or appear disrespectful
- Think about cultural norms of the person you are communicating with, what is considered polite and appropriate to them
- Consider your professionalism in the given context
2. **Body language**
- In written communication such as email or instant message, sometimes we use emoji or special characters to convey emotions, so think carefully about which ones are appropriate.

- Think about what your profile picture says about you – is it professional? Do you want to appear friendly, approachable? Serious? Creative? Fun?
3. **Voice and tonality**
- Again, in written communication it's important to think about the punctuation you use, the font style and size, and what that conveys to the recipient.

The research company Statista asked companies which digital communication channels they started to use for the first time, or dramatically increased the use of, in response to Covid-19. The results were live chat, email and video.

In all digital communication, think about three steps: Who? What? When?

For this session, Wong chose to focus on email and video call communication in particular, starting with email.

Email communication: be precise, clear and courteous

Who - is the recipient your boss, a client or teammate? What is the person's work style? If you have just had a meeting with the person, how did they come across to you? These things should all inform your approach.

Think about the hierarchy of who you put in 'to', 'cc' and bcc'. And try not to bcc someone without telling them first or they will be confused.

Avoid casual greetings such as 'Hey, Hiya'.

What - be precise and clear. It is generally good to brief in emails, but if you are too brief it can be confusing, so make sure your point or request is clear. Proofread your email before you send it, to check for errors and spelling mistakes and to ensure you have used punctuation correctly.

Use the subject line to make your request clear. Within your team you might also agree between you to use taglines in your subject lines, such as 'your response required' or 'acknowledgement' to save time on internal requests.

If you feel you need to change the medium, such as to switch from email to a phone call, then do so. Sometimes tone can be difficult to convey correctly in email – don't be afraid to pick up the phone or send a voice message if something is at risk of being confused or misinterpreted.

To sign off the email, think about what the following options convey:

Sincerely - can be overly formal

Regards - neutral, traditional and expected

Just your name - only with those you are familiar with

Thank you - neutral, effective, general

When - consider what time you send your email. If it is an urgent request you want someone to read, you might choose first thing in the morning. Or, if you know the person works late, then you might send it later on. Think about what would be a good time for them.

And in replying to emails, response time is important; even if you don't have time in the moment to respond in full, it is a good habit to reply promptly, even if only to briefly acknowledge receipt. You can then reply in more detail later.

Video calls: open, inclusive and engaging

Wong outlined a few things to be mindful of with your set-up for a video call:

- Avoid sitting with a bright window right behind you, as you will appear in shadow
- Make sure your head and shoulders are in the centre of the screen, not to the side
- Be careful with virtual backgrounds as they can disappear, revealing where you actually are
- If on a mobile phone, turn the screen to landscape so that your video takes up the whole screen
- Keep an eye on the chatbox during the call
- Use a headset for improved sound quality
- Check your internet connection
- Check your video settings before joining - make sure no filters have been added

And if you are moderating the meeting:

- Send a meeting agenda before the meeting and ask your team to prepare ideas beforehand
- Keep it short and to the point
- Encourage virtual hand-raising
- It is easy to neglect team members in a virtual meeting. Try to choose people and call on them to share their ideas. Avoid general questions such as 'does anyone have anything to share?' as you will only hear from the same people.

Just as with emails, video call communication should follow the three steps of who, what and when, said Wong.

Who - who is the audience? With your attire, it is now generally acceptable to be a bit more casual in digital meetings, but still make sure you are wearing business-appropriate clothes.

Be careful with your account name if you use it for personal calls as well – check it is appropriate for the meeting.

What - use visual aids to help you convey your message. Speak slowly and clearly – and be aware that there may be a time lag depending on people's internet connections.

Don't ask 'can you hear me?' at the start, just go straight in. Be aware of your body language and your facial expressions during the meeting. For example, covering your mouth could look like you're

hiding something, or if you are tensing or compressing your lips, it may appear as if you are uncomfortable, perhaps as if you're holding back from saying something.

Instead, if you are presenting you could use your hands more, with open gestures to come across as open and accepting, while tilting your head slightly shows that you are interested in what is being said.

Practise speaking directly into the camera lens, rather than at the screen, as much as you can, so that it appears more that you are looking into the audience's eyes.

When - be aware of different time zones and try to set the most reasonable one for most people to attend. Avoid start times being too early or late, even if people might be working from home. And don't let the meeting drag on for too long.

Q&A

Following the presentation, Wong invited the audience to ask questions.

If you are giving a virtual presentation, what should you be looking out for to check your audience is engaged?

Just like in person, if you see people start using their phones, sitting back, looking around and looking distracted, then you might be losing the audience.

Look out for bigger movements that you can spot easily, such as people sitting back, putting their head in their hands, rather than straining to see the smaller details, as you will just distract yourself.

How should you address a group of people in an email?

'Dear all' is good. If it's just two or three people, you might write their names out.

Video calls can be energy-draining. How can you look energetic while on a call?

Use your hands to express yourself – deliberate, slow hand movements. Remember to smile. Keep your surroundings bright, as it automatically lifts everything, rather than being in a darkened room.

Is brevity always best?

Not necessarily, but clarity is the way to do it. If you have to be more long-winded but clear (if you are a lawyer explaining something in detail, for example), then do that. It comes back to what you are trying to convey, and what impression you want the person to have about you? How do you want to come across?