

What the  
Window  
Cleaner  
Saw!

WHAT THE WINDOW CLEANER SAW!

# PRESENTER'S GUIDE

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# Introduction to the booklet

This booklet is written for trainers who wish to have a 'package' that introduces people to non-verbal communication.

Most of the communications training that is done tends to focus on either written or spoken communication. Important though these unquestionably are, they miss a mode of communication between people that is even more fundamental: visual communication or non-verbal behaviour.

All the evidence suggests that, given a choice, people place more credence on non-verbal than verbal behaviour. Consider, for example, what happens when people meet for the first time. Information about appearance, dress, facial expression, handshakes and bodily posture supersede anything that might be said in those first few minutes. Even when people know each other well, non-verbal behaviours are constantly being 'read' to fathom the true meanings of what is being said and to assess the emotional climate. Interestingly, when what is said conflicts with the message transmitted by non-verbal behaviours, the latter always wins. If, for example, you went into someone's office to be welcomed with the words "Splendid, just the person I wanted to see!" while the speaker had his back to you rummaging through an in-tray, you could be forgiven for concluding that your arrival was far from welcome!

If non-verbal behaviour is so important, why, you may wonder, doesn't it feature more in communications training? There are two reasons:

1. People feel that it is in some way theoretical and not relevant to the realities of our working lives and the practicalities of doing our jobs.
2. That it is difficult to understand and pin down.

The answer to the first objection is that an understanding of non-verbal behaviour, whether acquired through experience or training, is essential to good communication. Successful communicators understand other people's non-verbal signals and are masters of their own behaviour. Some people have this talent naturally; most of us need to learn it.

As to the second point that non-verbal behaviour is difficult to pin down, you will find when you look at this film and read this booklet, that it is all more practical and specific than you had perhaps anticipated. As we grow up we all develop an awareness of non-verbal behaviour. It is simply a question of bringing the awareness to the surface, making us conscious of what we already know.

# Introduction to the film

The film has four main characters:

- Len** An office window cleaner who has made a study of non-verbal behaviours from his electrically operated cradle. For 35 years Len has seen, but not heard, countless interactions between people working in offices and become a self-taught expert on non-verbal goings-on.
- Hotrod** Len's clumsy assistant who under his patient guidance is learning to observe and interpret non-verbal behaviours. Hotrod has a long way to go, however, before he can match Len's impressive wisdom.
- Ogilvy** A brusque, supercilious Sales Manager who claims to 'know it all' despite the fact that he frequently exhibits unfortunate non-verbal behaviours.
- Tate** A young applicant for a sales job who performs unimpressively and allows himself to be intimidated by Ogilvy's brusque manner.

Ogilvy has just started interviewing Tate, with Len and Hotrod looking in as they clean the windows outside, when there is a sudden power failure. All the lights go out and Len's cradle is immobilised. Naturally they knock on the window and ask if they can pass through Ogilvy's office. This would have been a simple thing to accomplish save for the fact that the door handle comes off in Tate's nervous hands and they are all trapped.

Reluctantly, Ogilvy resigns himself to passing the time with his unlikely companions until the power is restored or his secretary returns from lunch.

Inevitably Len's interest in non-verbal behaviour soon emerges and with nothing better to do, Ogilvy and Tate are drawn into a tutorial with Len as their teacher. He demonstrates how both Ogilvy and Tate, in their different ways, were making 'non-verbal' mistakes in the interview; Ogilvy by, amongst other things, not looking up and greeting Tate properly, by letting his attention waver, by rubbing his eyes when asking questions, steepling his fingertips and jabbing his index finger at Tate. Tate is faulted for such things as averting his eyes when answering questions, sitting in a closed defensive way, shuffling in his seat and generally looking nervous and lacking in confidence.

Gradually Ogilvy and Tate get 'hooked' on what Len tells and shows them (with Hotrod's 'help!'). The catalogue of non-verbal behaviours explained by Len is comprehensive, including what it (probably) means when:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ▶ fingers are jabbed   | – aggressive                           |
| ▶ fingers are steepled   | – full of himself                      |
| ▶ head is tilted sideways  | – interested                           |
| ▶ head is tilted down  | – unsure                               |
| ▶ rubbing earlobe  | – not accepting what someone is saying |
| ▶ hand over mouth  | – not sure of what you are saying      |
| ▶ rubbing back of neck   | – that someone is a "pain in the neck" |
| ▶ rubbing eyes   | – disbelieving                         |
| ▶ hand clenched across chest   | – non-friendly                         |
| ▶ cuddling yourself  | – nervous                              |
| ▶ leaning back with hands tightly gripping chair arm                 | – threatened                           |
| ▶ crossed arms and legs  | – defensive                            |
| ▶ uncrossing arms  | – more relaxed                         |
| ▶ sitting up and looking   | – open and "showing a bit of gumption" |
| ▶ hand under chin, other hand across chest                           | – bored                                |
| ▶ sitting back, legs in figure 4 position, hands clasped behind head | – superior, "Lord Muck"                |

## Section 1

Continued

Len also demonstrates what happens when desks are barriers between people and makes other points about proximity and the importance of appropriate touching.

But the overriding point that Len makes is to urge Ogilvy and Tate (and therefore all of us) to “use your whole Ken Dodd (body) – eyes . . . face . . . hands . . . and the whole way you stand or sit . . . body posture”. As Len stresses “You’ve gotta suss how everything they’re doing fits together . . . does it fit his chat? . . . you can’t know just from looking at one little bit of them, gotta see how it all fits together.”