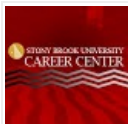


STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER

About Me



Stony Brook University Career Center

The Career Center at Stony Brook University exists to EDUCATE students about the career development process and industry options by empowering them to make informed career decisions. PREPARE students for experiential learning (i.e. internships and community service), employment and further education. CONNECT hiring organizations with our diverse student talent. OUR VISION for SBU students: Students will view academic and career planning as intertwined, and take responsibility for their success by acquiring knowledge of self and of career options, gaining related experience and establishing professional networks, reflecting on experiences to shape their next steps, and committing to ongoing career development and professional growth.

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Tuesday, July 19, 2011

Non-Verbal Communication in the Workplace

What **signals** are YOU sending in the workplace?

Understanding **nonverbal communication** is a major component to succeeding in the workplace. Why? Because we live in a visual world and actions really do speak louder than words. We can attribute most of how we are perceived by our coworkers to everything *besides* what we say. There are a few main areas of non-verbal communication to consider: eye contact, gesturing, proximity, posture, and time. Perhaps the best thing to remember is mirroring- especially when it comes to your boss. Mirroring is exactly what it sounds like- a reflection of the nonverbal cues of the individual(s) you are interacting with. So if your boss makes a lot of eye contact with you- you should try to do the same. Your best bet is to be aware of how your actions 'fit in' with those of everyone around you. Sound complicated? It's not! Read on for some tips:

Eye Contact: Good eye contact is essential. You don't need to stare (staring is rude!), but you do need to maintain eye contact for a few seconds at a time- especially if you are trying to explain yourself or express your undivided attention. Eye contact helps build rapport and establish personal connection. Not to mention, it ensures the speaker that you are actually listening. So, be sure to look up once in a while. This goes for presentations as well. Scan the room, focus on one person for a few seconds, and then move on. This can take some practice... but practice makes perfect.

Gestures: Go with what is natural for you. It is fine if you have a tendency to use your hands when you speak, but keep in mind that it can be visually distracting. Gestures convey a number of subtle messages, so take the time to **learn** about how you may be perceived when you cross your arms during a meeting, or lean back in your chair while speaking to a colleague.

Proximity: Since you can quickly and easily make someone feel uncomfortable if you invade their space, it's important to follow a few basic etiquette guidelines. On a larger scale, when entering someone's office or work area, you should make your presence known ('Hi' works wonders) so that they aren't startled. Don't just barge in. On a smaller scale, when you are having a conversation with one person (or even a small group of people), be respectful of personal space and boundaries. If someone takes a small step back, don't try to fill in that space. They've just communicated that they need some breathing room. Remember that you have the power to do the same.


Posture: No one likes a sloucher! Stand and sit up straight and you will not only look better, but you will also feel better. Don't do this to the point of discomfort, but just know that slouching won't get you anywhere- it conveys laziness and disinterest.

Time: This is perhaps the ultimate component of nonverbal communication. If you are consistently on time (which in reality, translates to a minute or two early) for meetings, etc., you will convey a strong message of professionalism. What about when you are late? You will seem inconsiderate and self-centered (how rude!). So, be on time, and you will be golden.

Some **quick tips**: smile, nod your head, and be aware of the tone and volume of your voice.

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