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Communications 107

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Case Study Six: Teamwork

1. Identify nonverbal behaviors that regulate turn talking within the team.

I identified that the main nonverbal behaviors of this conversation were mainly kinesics, artifacts, and silence. Kinesics refers to body position and body motions, including those of the face as well. The bodies of the co-workers expressed a lot; for example, when Bill was talking expressing his dislike for Victoria's ideas, his body and his eyes not wanting to look her directly in the eyes made someone else take over the conversation because of the discomfort and tension felt in the place, in this case mostly Jason took it. As for the artifacts, also used by Bill, we see how Bill, in search of distraction from the meeting, uses his PDA, which makes Jason and Victoria take the turn in the conversation to tell him that he is notoriously distracted and if he has a problem. I put silence as one of the nonverbal behaviors because, after certain moments of silence, another person seeks to avoid the awkwardness by speaking; for example, after Bill said he did not like the idea of PowerPoints, Jason, after Bill's silence, takes the talking turn.

2. Identify nonverbal behaviors that express relationship-level meanings of communication. What aspects of team members' nonverbal communication express liking or disliking, responsiveness, and power?

This conversation is rife with expressed emotions. We see Bill evidently annoyed by something, especially with Victoria, and we see that he expresses this discomfort through different gestures, for example, avoiding his gaze, using his

electronic device in the middle of the conversation, his facial gestures, which made the other members of the team aware that something was going on, creating tension. Victoria, for her part, reacts to this tension by trying to bring her attention to touching a bracelet in her hand, which denotes some embarrassment at Bill's reaction to her idea of using PowerPoint. Not only do we see bad emotions, but we can also see how other coworkers who were not involved in the drama react positively to the ideas provided in the meeting; for example, eyebrows twitching or smiling are strong nonverbal behaviors that signal that the situation is good.

3. How do artifacts affect the interaction between members of the team?

We have an intimate relationship with our electronic devices. We sleep with them, eat with them, and carry them in our pockets all the time, checking them on average about a hundred times a day, but the love for these devices can be excessive, so much so that it is possible that it interferes with what is going on around us, as in this particular case. As I said before, Bill expresses his annoyance from the first moment, and it seems that he does not want to hide it in any way; when Victoria is asked to take notes, Bill immediately starts using his PDA, something that everyone notices and generates discomfort because this was an important meeting in which they had to be attentive. The problem with the device is that it diverts Bill's attention and makes the others feel that he is not hearing them and that they are being ignored; it is disrespectful. This could also potentially cause other team members to follow suit and be distracted in the same way, thinking that this attitude is accepted, which would generate more discomfort.

4. If you were the sixth member of this team, what kinds of communication might you enact to help relieve tension in the group?

The situation is totally uncomfortable, to the point where not only those involved feel the tension, but everyone in the room does. In every company, even a one-person company, we face difficult dialogues on a daily basis. Sometimes the problem is that the discussion shifts from one topic to another without resolution, and in many others it is that the discussion has led to hurt one of the participants, their ego has been attacked, and it is necessary to come to the rescue. If I had been there, the first thing I would have done would have been to interrupt the chaos, slowing down the pace of speech, perhaps raising the volume of my voice a little and making myself heard above the noise. Once the attention is captured, the key is to lower the voice and speed using positive and integrative communication, emphasizing that we are a team. Second would be to make a shift to process. Our words should lead the group to visualize a common enemy, which is none other than the ineffective process in which we are involved and make a call to the maturity of the team to invite them to assume responsibility and the need to find an effective process. The key is to show that we all agree that we have reached a point that is leading us nowhere.