LEVERAGING ICT TO ENHANCE JOB INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH BODY LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT:
Our bodies have a language which determines the first impression that influences our chances at interviews. We rarely get a second chance to make a good first impression which usually occurs during the first 10 seconds of most human encounters, especially job interviews. Our body language has the power to wipe out any success achieved through the messages of spoken words. Unfortunately, little attention is being paid to body language. Also very few people are aware of the potential of ICT as a tool for fine-tuning body language to enhance one’s chances in life, especially job interview opportunities. Hence, this paper explores ways to leverage with simple ICT devices, such as webcam and video capture software to fine-tune one’s body language in order to enhance one’s chances in life, especially job interview opportunities.

Keywords: Job Interviews, Body Language, Webcam, Video Capture Software, First Impression.

1. INTRODUCTION:
Heathfield (2011) of About.com Guide stressed that it is a mistake for a company to ignore a red flag of body language from a job interview candidate. Also, many writers (such as, Allen, 1983; Beatty, 1991; Moore, 1991; Lowstuter & Robertson, 1992) and research papers, (such as, Heathfield, 2011; Micah, 2011 have been published about the “dos and don’ts” of job interviews. Lots of techniques have also been developed to help employers hire the right candidates and for candidates to get the job of their dreams [Doyle, 2011; Heathfield, 2011; Kobar & Smith, 2009; Marwijk, 2004]. There are books even on enhancing one’s vocal image [Glass, 1987]. Candidates are advised to practice in front of mirrors, friends, or relatives before the D-day to get feedbacks on their presentation skills, including their body language [Best-Job-Interview.com, 2011; Kelly,
However, mirrors only offer instant feedback, whose effect is often lost, almost immediately after. Friends and relatives can only provide subjective evaluations and offer suggestions which are of only immediate relevance and cannot always be assessed as needed. As a result, many otherwise qualified candidates lost out on the Job Interviews because they failed to present that extra edge, the Non-Functional Requirements, or those features that distinguish them from other candidates.

Researchers have confirmed this by showing that those who get jobs are not always the best candidates, but the best fit [CareerPlaybook, 2011; Slesinger, 2000]. So, according to him, we ultimately hire people who best fit into our organizational culture, and more than 50% of what the candidates present constitute body language that project this fit which has been understated and misunderstood, yet the most important aspect of human communication method. What is more significant is that the ICT facilities are deployed more for entertainment than for personal and corporate effectiveness, especially among the youth. (Akintunde, S.O; 2008)

Consequently, this paper aims to show how one can utilize ICT devices to capture one’s body language during a presentation for future review and modification to enhance one’s presentation skill and job interview opportunities. It endeavors to show the fact that one can control one’s body language using video recording tools to enhance one’s chance and opportunities in life. To do this, we shall discuss the concept of body language as a non-verbal communication, its role and impact in job interview and how to use it to enhance success at interviews.

**WHAT CONSTITUTES BODY LANGUAGE?**

“Any gesture or mannerism that we use to express a non-verbal message can be considered as a body language” [Kelly, 2007, p. 1]. Reeves (2006) said that, “there is no dictionary for body language”. While “it is impossible to say that, this or that gesture means X, Y or Z,” one must “pay attention to things like gesture, sitting up straight, planting your feet squarely on the floor, hand position and making eye contact with the interviewer” [Reeves, 2006, p. 2]. What one does not say (non-verbal) is just as important as, if not more than, what one does say (verbal) [Doyle, 2011]. According to him, what might constitute body language or non-verbal means of communication include the following:

- **Facial expression** – eye contact, smile, rolling your eyes
- **Posture** – sitting, standing, and head position
- **Gestures** – ticks, hands and leg movements or motions including handshakes, constant fidgeting
- **Paralanguage** – tone of voice, sounds that sometimes do not have a written form: grunts, cries, and other noise effects or vocal expressions. *Paralanguage* is defined as, “The set of nonphonemic properties of speech, such as speaking tempo, vocal pitch, and intonational contours, that can be used to communicate attitudes or other shades of meaning” [The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000]
- **Appearance or Dressing** – conservative or otherwise
- **Conduct** – general attitude
The above list influences how others perceive you, regardless of how you perceive yourself and how others see you in an interview supersede how you see yourself, because, “Perception is more powerful than fact” [Arredondo, 1994, p. 227].

2. **Body Language as a Non-Verbal Communication Tool:**

Interpersonal communication between people goes beyond the spoken words and can be classified into three basic codes: a) Language, b) Nonverbal signals (body Language), and c) Paralanguage [Moore, 1991, pp. 114-115]. Since body language is delivered mostly through the subconscious, we tend not to be aware what messages our bodies transmit to others. However, as Hoff (1988) stated, “Your audience will scan every personal detail about you for clues to your character and temperament,” because “presentation is a skill where preparation and attitude are apparent almost instantly” [Hoff, 1988, p. 27]. The receivers of your nonverbal messages watch and translate every move you make with your hands, arms, legs, eyes, head, or even your whole body. Even what you wear, to them, sends a message. A tux, though nice to wear on certain occasions, is not an acceptable dress for an interview for a CEO Job, unless one is interviewing as a butler. A candidate who dresses like an Elvis impersonator would have no chance either, unless as a Las Vegas hotel entertainer.

Our body language reveals our feelings and meanings to others, and other people's body language reveals their feelings and meanings to us as well. Again, all these body language signals happen at the conscious and unconscious levels. There are, however, many interpretations of one’s body language messages and implications [Asbell, 1991]. When one walks into a meeting room without smiling at the people there, they might perceive this as being unfriendly, and that may ruin any chance of networking with them. When someone is speaking to you and you roll up your eyes, you may be sending a nonverbal message that you do not believe what you are hearing. When you yawn during a lecture, you may consider as being tired or bored. According to Changing Minds, (2011), when someone moves toward you with arms open or raised, you may be feel being under a threat or the person may just want to shake your hands. Reeves, (2006) and Rush, (1994) also stress that, rubbing your nose may not mean anything other than a simple itch; blinking your eyes may not mean winking but an involuntary response of a simple twitch. As a result, Chapman (2011) warned, “Body language is not an exact science. No single body language sign is a reliable indicator. Understanding body language involves the interpretation of several consistent signals to support or indicate a particular conclusion.” However, in these situations perception of those who are receiving nonverbal messages, supersedes anything the sender of body language may think of or wish for yourself.

3. **The Role of Body Language in Job Interview**

Our whole self and thought pattern are projected through our body language and often misinterpreted by others. Even when we attempt to hide the true contents of our thoughts, our body language often betrays us. William James (1890) described the image of “self” as extending
Beyond one’s physical body to include a person’s possessions, reputation, family, and social ties. He divided the “self” into three: a) the material self, b) the social self, and c) the spiritual self. According to Asbell, (1991, pp. 127-134), it is this social self that is perceived by others; the self that can be “trained” to send a particular positive message.

Asbell, (1991), stressed that “Body language - posture, gestures, and touching - is as eloquent as the face …, and powerful enough to wipe out completely the messages of speech”. So, getting one’s body to speak the right language in the first time is very crucial, because, as it is often said, “one may not get another chance to make a good first impression.” This is crucial because, according to Bright,( 2009); and Reeves,(2006).one has just about 10 seconds to make a good job of it

Discussing the role of body language in interview, Career Playbook,(2011) presents an assumption in which all candidates who appear for interviews are qualified to various degrees. That is, they all possess the Functional Requirements for the job. He contended that the best-fit candidate is the one who gets the job. This best-fit, he explains, consists of

- 50% good chemistry (can you fit into the organization?),
- 30% competency (can you do the job?), and
- 20% willingness and enthusiasm (will you do the job?)

These suggest that “good chemistry” is what the candidate should project from his or her body language. Allen (1983, p. 40) put it as “we like people who are like ourselves.” He was referring to what he termed as the law of human motivation. That is, all our hiring processes are guarded by this law. So, according to him, employers ultimately hire people who best fit into the organizational culture, and more than 50% of what the candidates present constitute body language that project this fit.

Some of the ICT tools that could be used to do this are: a webcam and a simple video capture software on your PC, smart phones, or PDA with video capability to capture you practicing. Video recording has been utilized in many other human functions, from weddings to meetings, and even by heads of states before important speeches, but to use it to enhance personal goal opportunities is just not there. Use of hands, while it is encouraged to stress some points, as Reeves (2006) advised, it should be fine-tuned so that it does not make one appear aggressive. Changing Minds (2011) pointed out that, “the size of gestures may also be used to signal level of aggression, from simple finger movements to whole arm sweeps, sometimes even with exaggerated movements of the entire body” [Changing Minds, 2011, p. 2].

When it is said that “actions speak louder than words,” it is not just another overused cliché. In the real world, your actions, or rather, what you do not say, are made up over 50% of how others perceive you [Best-Job-Interview.com, 2011; CareerPlaybook, 2011; Changing Minds, 2011; Doyle, 2011; GNU, 2011; Mehrabian, n.d.]. The interviewee has just about a few seconds to make a good first impression [Bright, 2009; Reeves, 2006]. We all use our body to speak, whether or not we know it, that is, whether consciously or subconsciously, and it reveals a lot about us
Opportunities to make good use of body languages are often destroyed by bad habits. Hence apart from dressing appropriately specifies habit that must be avoided include never arriving late and avoiding some nasty habits, like nail biting, fist clenching, fidgeting, which are all forms of body language.

4. **IMPACT OF BODY LANGUAGE ON JOB INTERVIEWS:**

Studies have shown that over 60% of our communication skills in the form of tone and body language impact our listeners the most [Best-Job-Interview.com, 2011; CareerPlaybook, 2011; Changing Minds, 2011; Doyle, 2011; GNU, 2011; Hogan, 2011; Mehrabian, n.d.]. Asbell (1991) stated that body language is “powerful enough to wipe out completely the messages of speech” It is powerful enough to make some heads of states practice before appearing in public to deliver a speech.

Interviewers watch each candidate as he or she presents the case for being the best for the job. According to CareerPlaybook,( 2011), the interviewers look beyond the paper qualifications of the prospective candidates, they look for the best-fit candidates, the ones with the best chemistry. This fit is so important to the employers that they most often hire, not the best qualified, but the candidates they consider to fit well into their organization. Of course, this does not mean that candidates hired are not otherwise qualified, but that they possess that extra edge, the “non-functional requirements” of the job. Their body language, their whole attitude fits well with the job and the organizational culture. Employers who are not well versed in the interpretation of these nonverbal messages, or who ignore them often suffer from their wrong choices [Heathfield, 2011].

The impact of these nonverbal signals is felt in all encounters with and relationship between people, be it business or social. These signals reveal the contents of our thoughts, and betray us when we lie. Observers or recipients of our nonverbal signals often jump to the wrong conclusions about what those signals mean, resulting in people being misjudged regarding their intentions.

In business, the wrong person hired affects not only the co-workers, but the bottom line of the company as well. The impact of wrong employer to work for often manifests itself in unfulfilled expectations resulting in eventual poor performance on the part of the new hire [Heathfield, 2011]. These happen when at least one party (employer or candidate) ignores the red flags (body language), the consequence of which becomes very costly to both. This is avoidable, and all efforts should be made to properly decode and act on those nonverbal signals emanating from our body language.
5. USE OF ICT CONTROL OF BODY LANGUAGE TO GAIN COMPETITIVE EDGE?

Since we know these body language signals affect every aspect of our relationships, associations and encounters, it is important to “know how to properly express the body language of confidence and competence, and get a keen sense of how the interviewer is evaluating you?” [Hogan, 2011]. Body language as a form of “Nonverbal communication traits are learned behaviors: the manner in which a person communicates is largely learned from parents, teachers, early-life experiences, and professional role models. An advantage of learned behavior is that, having been learned, the behavior can be reinforced or modified” [Arredondo, 1994, p. 227]. Hence most researchers will advice candidates to practice in front of a mirror, a relative, or a friend to obtain instant feedbacks [Reeves, 2066]. It can be learned, controlled and fine-tuned. One just needs to see oneself as other will see one. It is what others see in or about one that counts, one’s own perception of oneself notwithstanding. As Hoff (1988, p.54) advised, “Talk to yourself before you talk to them,” meaning that one needs to practice well enough before the D-day. This is where ICT facilities become very important.

Tools Needed: To videotape your practice, you need the following items:

- The webcam on your PC (or a USB video capture device, a camcorder, a camera with video functionality, or a PDA with video functionality).
- A video capture software that comes with PC. This can be downloaded a free from the Internet (some with more features are available on the Internet for purchase).
- A wireless mouse is recommended, but not required. The wireless mouse offers the added flexibility of space and movement. Or you can simply have someone operate it for you.
- A straight-back chair (only for interviews)
- Enough room to move.
- Some materials on interviewing techniques and body language.
- Someone to chat with.

Implementation: For an interview, position yourself in the chair facing the camera so you can see yourself on the playback display unit. Click on the Capture button. From that moment you can see your posture and your gestures. You can then begin to keep adjusting yourself until you are sitting straight and looking forward with your feet planted on the floor. Your chat partner should be behind the camera. You can have your chat partner ask you some mock interview questions to see how your body language responds and determine the postures or body language that sent the desired impression. One can practice in front of a video camera to tune up those cues emanating from our body language. You keep repeating this until it becomes almost natural. Do this as many times as you deem necessary.

Similar exercise may be conducted on Video Capture Software. Video capture software lets you capture video files directly onto a PC from a Webcam, external devices, computer screen or streaming video. Most video capture software will save video file on your hard drive as .AVI,
.WMV, .FLV, .ASF, .MPG, .3GP, .MP4, .MOV, and other file formats. There is a lot of this software on the Internet and a host of software review companies, such as TopTenReviews (2011), for comparison of video capture software products.

It is important to note that, “A job interview is not a place to demonstrate ones fierce and rugged individuality” [Allen, 1983, p. 40]. It is the time to tame that fierce and rugged individuality of yours before they kill all your chances in life. The best part of this video recording is that you can review it as many times as you like and do as many times as you like, to give yourself a competitive edge.

6. CONCLUSIONS:
The importance of proper body language during an interview or a presentation cannot be overemphasized. The nonverbal signals that we transmit are read but are often misinterpreted by others, with often negative consequences on our lives. Numerous papers and books have been published to assist both the employers and the candidates with their choices. Ignoring the red flags carries with it the consequence that is very costly to both the employer and employee. Proper body language, however, can be learned and fine-tuned to suit different occasions and sent appropriate messages. In the service of this, simple ICT devices, such as webcam and a video capture software, can be leveraged to give the candidate that extra edge that tells the interviewer that one is, not only the best qualified but also, the best fit for the job and for the organization.

There are a lot of video capture software on the Internet, and there are software review companies that could assist one in the search of the best-fit video capture software. Seeing oneself as others will see or even before others see one present opportunity for a reshape for an edge which no one should want to pass. As they say, “there may not be another chance to make a good first impression”.

91
7. REFERENCES:


