

IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN SALES

VAŽNOST NEVERBALNE KOMUNIKACIJE U PRODAJI

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Abstract: *A salesperson's communication skills are an important part of selling. If we have a skilled negotiator, the power of persuasion will lead to the sale of a product or service. Verbal communication is important, while non-verbal communication in sales is the key to sales success. Some people are born with persuasion and communication skills while in most cases communication can be practiced and learned. The conducted research shows the importance of non-verbal communication in sales and how it affects consumers and their attitudes.*

Key words: *Communication skills, Verbal and nonverbal communication*

Sažetak: *Komunikacijske vještine prodavača su važan dio prodaje. Ukoliko imamo vještog pregovarača moć uvjeravanja će dovesti do prodaje proizvoda ili usluge. Verbalna komunikacija je pri tome važna, dok je neverbalna komunikacija u prodaji ključ uspjeha prodaje. Neki ljudi se rađaju sa sposobnošću uvjeravanja i vještina komunikacije dok se u većini slučajeva komunikacija može vježbati i naučiti. Provedeno istraživanje pokazuje važnost neverbalne komunikacije u prodaji te kako ista utječe na potrošače i njegove stavove.*

Ključne riječi: *Komunikacijske vještine, verbalna i neverbalna komunikacija*



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1. Introduction

Communication between people is an important part of everyday life. Whether it is business or private, it affects every individual and determines the course of his life. Even when we don't communicate, we communicate. We are often not aware of the signs we send when it comes to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication in the sales and business environment is very important because it directly affects the mood of the potential customer for the sales action. In non-verbal communication, we can highlight body behaviour, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, touches and other signs that do not refer to the voice itself.

There is nonverbal communication in the clothes we wear, the styles and colours. In touching, tasting and smelling, the sounds we hear and the signs and symbols we see. Our dreams are full of nonverbal messages that we seldom understand. We encounter nonverbal communication in all aspects of life, in nature and the environment. In reality, the things we speak or read ultimately take a back seat to the vast and incredible world of nonverbal communication. Most of what we know of our world and people is nonverbal but we do not pay attention to it.

Non-verbal communication gives added value to verbal communication, helps overcome vocal barriers, helps in communication with people who have hearing difficulties, increases efficiency in sales and strengthens the reliability and credibility of the seller and the company. Individuals can learn to communicate effectively and convincingly with potential customers in sales.

2. Sales business communication

According to the Economic Lexicon, communication can be defined as "establishing an information connection between systems that have the ability to receive, memorize, process and send signals". "Communication is the exchange of information, using verbal and non-verbal means that are adapted to the social nature of the situation. [1]

Besides helping to define who we are, communication provides a vital link with others. Researchers and theorists have identified a whole range of social needs that we satisfy by communicating. These include pleasure, affection, companionship, escape, relaxation, and control. [2]

Teenagers are natural sellers. They sell themselves to their peers. They get their parents to let them out late, buy a new stereo, let them use the car. They never say no. However, when we get into a job we forget how to sell. The problem is that when we enter the real world of business something happens - our selling skills become judged. We become intimidated; we put up excuses as to why we cannot sell. We convince ourselves that it is beyond us, or too difficult, or beneath us. The professional salesperson must have the ability to convey ideas to others. It is an essential quality. It is communicating. There are several things that you must do at the same time to communicate effectively. Some of these are [3]:

- Listen attentively to others and what they are saying
- Accept the right of others to hold a different point of view

- Never over react to comments and views
- Never interrupt a sentence
- Observe their body language
- Pay complete attention

The division of forms of communication is done using certain criteria. Communication differs by method and number of participants. There are the following types of communication [4]:

- Communication between two people
- Communication in a small group
- Organized communication
- Public communication
 - Communication through mass media

Human communication is constantly conducted on two levels, namely verbal or digital and non-verbal or analog. They flow parallel to each other, so it is not possible to divide or separate them. Verbal and non-verbal communication can complement each other in different ways. First of all, the non-verbal can replace the verbal in the case when nodding the head instead of saying a verbal yes, it can emphasize or soften it like a smile when expressing joy, they can be the opposite in the example of an attempt to express pleasure, which is contradicted by appearance, and non-verbal behaviour can also regulate verbal and in two ways [4]:

- The first way consists in the individual's verbal and non-verbal behaviour influencing the production of their own messages: they can change their body posture when they want to change the topic, they can verbalize certain ideas with gestures, and during pauses the spoken information is organized into units.
- Another way of regulation refers to influencing the behaviour of the partner in the interaction with his verbal and non-verbal messages. One example of this way of regulation is when one person stops speaking, and another person starts speaking at the same time and without stuttering. Based on the art of regulation, people make judgments about each other.

Verbal communication is communication in which words are communicated. The forms in which verbal communication occurs are reading, writing, speaking and listening. According to many people, the most important and also the most prevalent form of verbal communication is listening, which "comprises as much as 40% of communication, but it is also the most neglected form of verbal communication nowadays and should definitely be given much more importance attention in communication with other people." [5]

"Verbal activity is a conscious activity. Its function is to inform about events and objects from the environment, about emotions and attitudes, and it is used to express ideas." [4] The means of social influence that brings the most success is verbal communication because "it is the best and almost complete way to express thoughts,

the most diverse and complex contents, and also to present the most complete and precise ideas and knowledge". [6]

Non-verbal communication could most simply be defined as "communication without words". [7] It is impossible not to communicate, considering that "at every moment, with or without the use of words, communication takes place between people with the help of facial expressions, gestures, body position and some other signs that show feelings". [8] When you meet a person, you get an impression of that person. This impression refers to what kind of message the person sent through non-verbal communication, facial expression, movements and the like. Although it has a greater share in the overall process of communication, "non-verbal communication is not the basic form of human communication, although regardless, it often affects the opinion of someone more than verbal communication. This is confirmed by research that shows that non-verbal signs are five times stronger than verbal ones". [9] Non-verbal communication is not defined as a conscious activity, but happens spontaneously, so in some moments when verbal and non-verbal communication do not send the same message, non-verbal communication is more trusted than verbal communication.

3. Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication consists of messages expressed by non-linguistic means such as body movement, vocal characteristics, touch, appearance, physical space, physical environment, and time. Nonverbal skills are vital for competent communicators. Nonverbal communication is pervasive; in fact, it is impossible to not send nonverbal messages. Although many nonverbal behaviours are universal, their use is affected by both culture and gender. Most nonverbal communication reveals attitudes and feelings; in contrast, verbal communication is better suited to expressing ideas. Nonverbal communication serves many functions. It can repeat, complement, substitute for, accent, regulate, and contradict verbal communication. When presented with conflicting verbal and nonverbal messages, communicators are more likely to rely on the nonverbal ones. For this reason, nonverbal cues are important in detecting deception. It's necessary to exercise caution in interpreting such cues, however, because nonverbal communication is ambiguous. [10]

The share of verbal communication in total communication is "less than 35%, while the non-verbal share is higher than 65%." Non-verbal signs allow only an approximate idea, and it is not possible to decipher them unambiguously, and because of this, people interpret them differently. In order to be able to interpret them correctly, it is important to pay attention to the following rules: movements should be studied in groups and not independently of each other, furthermore, attention should be paid to the fact that verbal and non-verbal signals match, which, when they are different, however, the non-verbal ones are more valuable. Therefore, if the signals match, it can be safely said that what they are saying is true. Gestures should be interpreted in the context in which they appear. Context determines their meaning, for example, a person's crossed arms and legs indicate that it is winter if they are sitting at a bus station on a cold winter's day, and a negative or defensive attitude in a case where they are trying to sell them an idea". [11] During communication, the gaze is

focused mostly on the face because emotions are most often expressed precisely by facial expressions, and the six main emotions can be most easily recognized - happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise. Facial expressions change rapidly.

Gesture	Meaning	Gesture	Meaning	Gesture	Meaning
<i>Walking upright</i>	Confidence	<i>Touching nose</i>	Doubt, lying	<i>Tapping nails or fingers</i>	Impatience
<i>Hands on hips</i>	Standby	<i>Readiness Rubbing eyes</i>	Distrust	<i>Smoothing hair</i>	Uncertainty
<i>Legs crossed</i>	Boredom	<i>Arms crossed behind the back</i>	Anger, fear	<i>Tilting the head</i>	interest
<i>Arms crossed over chest</i>	Defensive stance	<i>Closed ankles</i>	Comprehension	<i>Nail biting</i>	Nervousness
<i>Sitting with legs apart</i>	Relaxation	<i>Leaning head on arm</i>	Boredom	<i>Pulling ear lobe</i>	Indecisiveness
<i>Hands in pockets</i>	Dejection	<i>Rubbing palms</i>	Foreboding	<i>Slow head tilt</i>	Boredom
<i>Hands on cheek</i>	Thinking	<i>Crossed arms above head and crossed legs in sitting position</i>	Confidence, superiority	<i>Outstretched, open palms</i>	Honesty, openness

Table 1: Gestures of nonverbal communication

"A smile is a characteristic facial expression that indicates a positive state everywhere. A smile is very powerful and most often arises spontaneously." [8] "Eye contact can be short or long, direct or indirect, and intermittent, but it depends on gender, age, status and degree of closeness with the other person". [12] People are more inclined to look into the eyes when the person they are communicating with is interesting and they like them, when the topics they discuss are not too intimate and serious, when there is a greater distance between them and the interlocutor, when there is an effort to influence someone and when people are open. On the contrary, if the situation is reversed, people look less in the eyes of the interlocutor during the conversation. The gaze directed towards the other person is twice as long when

listening to them than when speaking. Wide pupils are a sign of liking, and narrowed pupils are a sign of dislike. [12]

4. Communication of sales staff

Sales is the most important function of any sales company. Sale implies handing over a product or service to another person for permanent ownership at a certain price. The goal of every sales company is to build strong relationships and partnerships. "Modern sales jobs are divided into less demanding, simpler sales and demanding, more complex sales. Sales jobs are: order takers, demand promoters, new business acquirers, sellers to new customers, sellers to existing customers, technical support sales staff, sales engineers, sales of services, sales to retailers, sales in retail". [13]

"Selling is the personal communication of information with the help of which a potential customer is convincingly helped to buy something - a product, service, idea or something else that meets the customer's need". [14]

In the phase of discovering the customer's needs, which is actually a research phase, because the seller still does not have enough information about what the customer wants and needs. The seller discovers the customer's wishes and needs through a conversation with him and through the questions he has to ask him, this is the only way to find out whether the customer needs or does not need a certain product and if he needs it for what the customer needs a certain product or service. "At this stage, it is important to take the time to come up with and ask questions that will properly reveal the information the seller needs. In order to get the answers, he needs to better understand the wishes and needs of the buyer, the seller must define in advance what he wants to find out and adapt his questions to the buyer's own communication style and the specific situation they are in, and it is very important for the seller to have control in the conversation with the buyer". [15]

Access to the customer plays an important role in sales. The goal of approaching the customer is for the seller to inspire confidence in the customer and to make him interested in the product by making a good impression on the customer. Good salespeople know and take seriously the following statement: "You can be the best-prepared salesperson in your industry, but if you have the wrong approach to the customer, your chances of making the sale are very slim." [16] The seller must not impose himself on the customer or be annoying in any way, but it is important that he receives enough information in order to offer the customer a suitable product.

5. Research and results

An integral part of this paper is the research conducted with the help of a survey created in Google forms. The survey on the importance of non-verbal communication in sales was conducted on a sample of 149 people, and the answers were collected by e-mail and by publishing the survey on the social network Facebook. The respondents are male and female, of all age groups, the responses of the survey participants and the results of the research will be presented in the continuation of the work.

The goal of the research is to determine the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in sales. The goal is to find out what motivates customers to buy, how important the seller's appearance is to them, as well as the store itself, how important the seller's attitude and gestures are in communication, and how non-verbal communication influence their decision to buy products. The research was conducted in the period from November 15th 2021 until February 15th 2022 through a survey made with the help of Google tools and the answers were collected by email and posting on the social network Facebook.



Table 2. Importance of facial expression and body language of the seller

Table 2 shows that almost 60% of respondents notice the facial expressions and body language of seller.

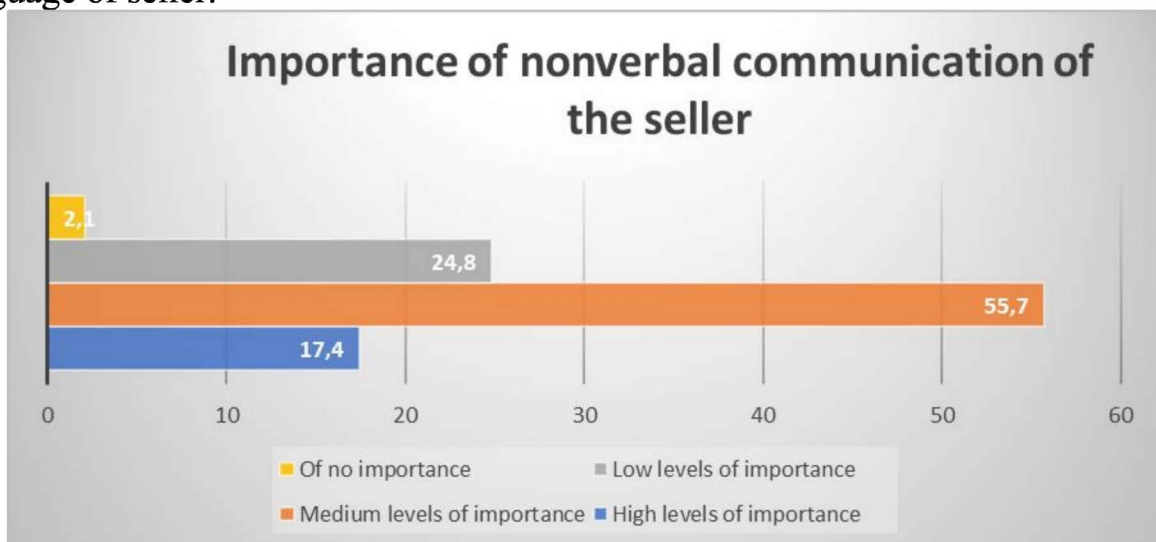


Table 3. Importance of nonverbal communication of the seller

Table 3 shows the importance of non-verbal communication in sales, where 73% of respondents consider it very or moderately important, while only 2% consider it not important at all.



Table 4. Visibility of negative nonverbal signs from the seller

Table 4 shows that 36% of respondents notice negative non-verbal seller signs, while 54% notice them sometimes.

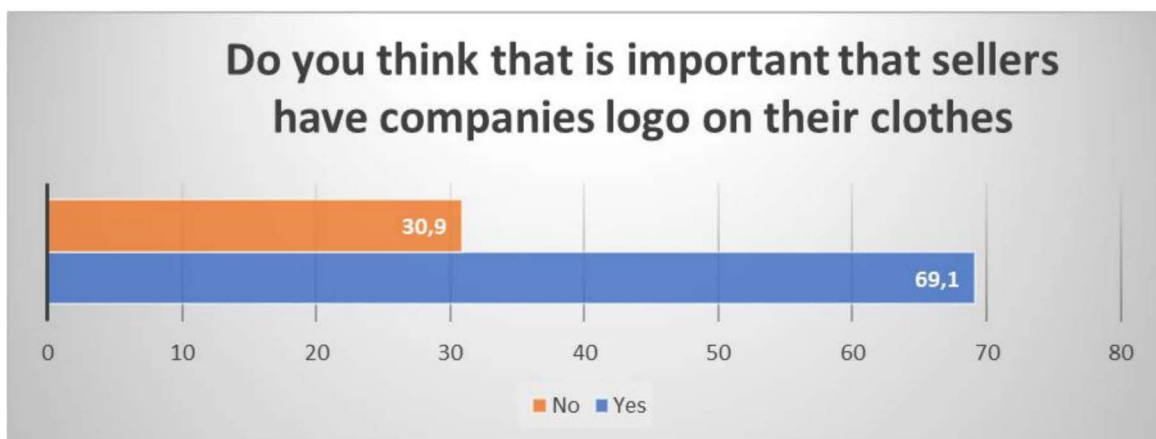


Table 5. Importance of companies' logo on the seller

Table 5 shows that as many as 70% of respondents believe that the company's logo on the seller's clothing is important.

6. Conclusion

Communication in everyday life, including in sales, is the key to satisfaction and success. Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal communication has a significant impact on the success of any business. From the behaviour towards employees, partners, co-workers to the relationship towards potential customers of a particular product or service. In this context, we can see how important it is for the customer to have a satisfactory relationship with him in order to make a purchase and repeat it. From the manner and style of clothing, logos on clothing, eye contact, body language and gestures. Most of these signs are noticed by potential customers and significantly influence their purchase decision.

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