

Sales Strategies



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Body Language that Sells

Body language is a powerful form of communication. Studies in psychology indicate that the effect you have on others depends on what you say verbally (7%), the way in which you say it (38%), and your body language (55%). This means that 93% of

your communication is conveyed beyond the meaning of what you're saying.

Whenever you meet someone for the first time, you immediately assess each other's body

language for perceived kindness or hostility, just like animals instinctively do in the wild. When you communicate with customers, your appearance, your posture, your facial expressions, your gestures, and your manners convey messages. Body language reveals thoughts and emotions. Choosing the right approach is vital when it comes to making a sale at the front counter.

Remember, communication is a two-way street. When it comes to non-verbal communication, not only do you have to be conscious of reading what your customer's body language is telling you, but you also have to be conscious of what your body language is telling a customer. What does a customer see when they meet you for the first time? How does that person feel about your approach?

Understanding Your Body Language

You only get one chance to make a first impression. When meeting a customer for the first time, your initial body language speaks volumes to your customer about you, what you're like, and how you may be able to meet their custom framing needs. For many consumers, custom framing can be both a personal relationship and a business transaction. This is not dissimilar to the relationship that people may have with a hairstylist at a high-end salon. Some people are very loyal to their hairdressers (for reasons other than price), and loyal customers are valuable to any business.

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A misinterpreted non-verbal communication or negative demeanor could result in an abrupt end to a potential relationship with your customer. Here are the top 15 things to consider regarding your body language.

- 1. Personal Presentation** - An unkempt or disheveled appearance only reduces a client's confidence in you from the get-go as well as a perception about the quality of your products. Good grooming and personal hygiene are a solid foundation to disarm any initial personal judgments (which are always made, despite political correctness) and to start building trust. No sale is ever made without an element of trust.
- 2. Attire** - A shabby presentation or inappropriate attire doesn't appeal to most consumers. Always dress tastefully and remember that the person behind your counter represents your

*It's not what you say;
it's how you say it
that matters.*

business's image. This is why uniforms are a great alternative to allowing personal choice in work attire. Uniforms visually convey trust as well as an image of your store. Name badges are a professional and inexpensive way to help your customers remember employee names. Knowing someone's name is a great place to start when trying to build a personal relationship, so make it easy for customers to know your name by wearing a name badge.

3. **Eye Contact** - When you first meet a customer, always make eye contact for at least a few seconds and then maintain regular eye contact throughout the conversation, particularly when that person is speaking. Initial eye contact is a signal for communication to commence. Poor eye contact is unsettling for customers and sends negative messages, such as "I'm too busy to deal with you right now" or "I'm interested in something else more than you." Eye contact is critical when quoting a price. Comfortably look customers in the eye whenever you quote the price so they know you are confident in your products' value and that you are conveying the price with transparency and honesty.
4. **People Like to Be Noticed** - If customers walk into your shop, especially with something under the arm, then you know they are on a mission (and not just there to browse), so acknowledge them first and make an effort to come out

from behind the counter to greet them. Refusing to budge from behind your counter subtly shows that you are not willing to make any extra effort for them. It also forces the perception of "my side" versus "your side" in the consulting process, which in turn can lead on to a "you versus me" situation. This is not conducive to building rapport and creating a bond.

5. **Reflect Clients' Body Language** - If a customer's body language is open, mirroring that body language helps build rapport. Slightly altering your posture to mirror a client's helps make that person feel comfortable and more at ease with you. When you are you are on the same wavelength as your customer, it also helps create a bond. If they are nervous or reserved, tone down your enthusiasm, but remain positive to make the client feel more comfortable.
6. **Smile** - A genuine smile shows a positive attitude. The amazing thing about a smile is that it is contagious. When you smile at someone, it is reciprocated with one in return (even if it is faked). Always greet your clients with a smile; just don't over do it or be unnatural. Use a calm, easy smile when you first meet your customer, and save your big smile for when something in the conversation and consultation warrants it.
7. **Don't Touch** - In this day and age, it is completely inappropriate to touch a client at any time, other than a civil greet-

ing handshake, and that applies more in the corporate world than it does in retail.

8. **Open Posture** - What does it say when you see a shop assistant slouching or leaning on a counter? As a customer, how do you feel when a shop assistant sighs or exhales? Whatever you feel, chances are that it's not good. That's why, as a consultant, you must never reveal any indications of impatience or boredom, even if you feel it. Avoid sighs, and don't put your hands on your hips, lean on the counter, or fold your arms. Keep your hands open, stand up straight, and show customers that you're willing to make an effort for them.
9. **Don't Rush** - If a client is uncooperative or seemingly insensitive to your time, avoid trying to rush the consulting session. Don't forget this is your client's consulting session. Generally speaking, the more important a customer feels throughout a consulting process, the less important price becomes. So even if you feel you don't have the time to waste, it can still be worth the wait. And there's nothing stopping you from making your pricing reflect this time, too.
10. **Show Interest and Listen** - Show you are genuinely interested in clients' projects, and they will feel comfortable building a relationship with you. Invite customers to tell you their stories, and listen. The more that customers speak, the more invested they

become in the process and in their bond with you—and the less important price becomes. Remember, your attitude shows, and any sign of boredom or lack of enthusiasm only makes it harder for a customer to decide to buy from you. And that usually brings the focus back on the price.

11. Be Enthusiastic - Customers are positively affected by enthusiasm. When you truly believe in a product choice or particular frame design, customers can easily become influenced by your enthusiasm and become believers too. And believers become customers.

12. Be Confident - Lack of confidence is a form of sales suicide. Remember, there's nothing to be afraid of. It's custom framing, and when it comes to quoting a price it's "just the price" and it's only money. If you suffer from always thinking that the price is the only thing that matters, then you are devaluing your product by selling it as a commodity.

13. Treat All Art with Respect - Take extra care and time when handling a customer's artwork, and always treat it with the highest degree of respect just as if it is a priceless Picasso (even if it's not). Some framers put white cotton gloves on before each consultation to create a special feeling of value for the customer's artwork or other treasure.

14. Phone Etiquette - Never be distracted by a phone call, text message, or e-mail when you are in front of a customer. Set up an answering service on your phone or implement a team protocol so that you don't have to personally answer the phone when you are in the middle of a consultation. You never know what the call may be about, and you may not be able to handle it quickly. If you do take the call, you may find that a customer will feel that you are choosing the phone call over her, and that is likely to be looked upon as inconsiderate.

15. Professionalism - If a situation ever goes wrong, it is important to always maintain a high degree

of professionalism and never let customers see you get frustrated or lose your cool (even if someone else isn't controlling theirs). Never bicker with your staff or your partner in front of a customer. If a customer comes into the shop at the wrong moment (which can happen), then just mentally box up your issue and put it on the shelf so you can start fresh and attend to your prospective client's needs. You can always revisit your issue later—if you haven't already cooled down by then.

When it comes to having the perfect body language for a consultation, you can't be everything to everyone—but that's still no reason not to try. When you make the effort to look and act like a winner, you're more likely to actually become a winner. Customers will remember how you made them feel and what your body language was like during a consultation far longer than they'll remember your words. As the old saying goes, it's not what you say; it's how you say it that matters. ■

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