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## Refinement of Virtual Work Environment and Behaviour through Digital Body Language

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### **Abstract:**

*The article presents the notion of digital body language. The study focuses on the importance and the necessity of Digital Body Language and the facets that need to be considered while one is digitally communicating. The Practice of Digital Body Language will upkeep the virtual work environment and behaviour resulting into enhanced productivity and building a healthy workplace culture.*

**Keywords:** digital body language, digital communication, emails

### **Introduction:**

#### **The digital transformation after the pandemic:**

The Covid-19 Pandemic motivated us to digital adoption. Be it business organizations or Education sector this digitization has been adopted by every sector. The response to pandemic has resulted into many changes all over the world. Among these some changes such as digital adoption has been considered as the new normal. The reason is business organisations and the education sectors find it convenient, economical and easy to work and get educated digitally. It is much easier for businesses to work remotely. Businesses have already made significant investments to help them protect their digital security while building a technology stack that allows employees to work with Flexible scheduling as well as the option of work from their home offices is open. Business organisations have now very well understood and realized the power and prospective of digital adoption. They further believe that adopting technology for well established businesses or the new budding businesses everyone needs to be positioned themselves and relinquish the innovative

opportunities that are availed to them. All businesses need to adopt the technology if they want turn the market tables into one's businesses favour.

If we talk about the Education Sector, the teachers have become techno-savvy by adapting themselves to the digitization and are successful at framing their virtual lesson plans. On the other side digitization is acting as a helping aid to those who were abandoned of education due to various constraints. It has helped such students to get educated digitally. Besides digital adoption in Business organisations and Education Sector, there are other sectors too which have adopted digitization. To name a few- Healthcare, Banking, Logistics, Agriculture, Media and entertainment, E-commerce and many more.

The rapid evolution of the technology has induced us to acquire excellent technical skills to make ourselves competent and job ready to fulfil the job roles and prosper in the corporate world. Reskilling and up skilling our digital knowledge has skyrocketed and has become the need of the hour.

Keeping this view in mind the researcher intends to provide some guidelines as to how one can digitally be competent at the virtual work environment. This can very well done by making oneself aware and understand the concept of Digital Body Language.

#### **Meaning of Digital Body Language:**

We all are well aware about Body Language. While we orally communicate it is said that 'what you speak' is not so influencing rather than 'how you speak'. How you speak is nothing but the representation of one's Body Language while communicating. The listener is much influenced and persuaded by the speaker's use of Kinesics and Voice Modulation in his communication. If the speaker's oral talk is not in accordance with his/ her body language than there is the possibility of a communication barrier. Similarly when a person is communicating digitally the message is more influenced by how it is communicated rather than what is communicated? If the communicator fails in his/her representation of the message there can occur a communication barrier. The concept of 'how he/she is communicating' is nothing but the study of Digital Body Language.

#### **The Concept of Digital Body Language:**

Steve Woods developed the term "Digital Body Language" in 2009. Steve explains that the accumulation of a person's digital activity is nothing but digital body language. Digital body language includes every email opened, website visit, Google search, recommendation from a social media site, and webinar attended. It is the culmination of all digital touch points. Digital Body language is similar to body language as a Sales person while managing a deal; reads body language through facial expressions, body posture, eye motions, and much other minor information.

As the workplace communication and the working system have almost adapted to the

digitization, awareness of the Digital Body Language is a term that has become vital in the modern virtual workplace environment as many people are working remotely. Digital body language is about all the activities that are exchanged digitally, say it an online meeting, with video on or off, or through written media delivered by text, email or instant messaging.

According to Kristina Smith, the Manager and Business Consultant, EPAM Continuum Having the knowledge and following the workplace culture plays a significant role in the formal communication. Recent workplace culture demands effective digital communication and for this the awareness and knowledge of digital body language is pivotal. Ignoring this leads to challenging the culture and the workplace ethics. As in a face to face conversation, erroneous use of body language can create miscommunication and misunderstanding similarly is with the inappropriate use of digital body language. Consequently such miscommunications will directly or indirectly affect the functioning of the Organization.

Erica Dhawan, best known as the leading expert on 21st century collaboration and teamwork in a digital-first workplace recently published a book, entitled "Digital Body Language: How to Build Trust and Connection, No Matter the Distance". She states in her book what constitutes digital body language and how one can manage and improve it.

If we try to understand digital body language, it is the etiquette and manners of video calls. The messages we put on and the Emoji's that we use in group chats, the way we present our self during conference calls, the way we handle a phone call, following of the email etiquette. Putting the above mechanisms together makes Digital Body Language. Our digital body language is critical to build and maintain rapport, to nurture high morale and create an affirmative work environment for everyone in the company.

Erica Dhawan made a survey of 2,000 employees and managers. Through the survey she found that 70% report poor digital communication as a everyday barrier to their work, in a way every week four hours of formal communication is wasted. If this is calculated then it reveals that 10% of our working time in a week is wasted.

#### **The 4 laws of Digital Body Language:**

Erica Dhawan talks about 5 core strategies for good digital body language to better comprehend the challenges and opportunities of modern communication and position oneself positively.

##### **1. Brevity Creates Confusion:**

The desire for faster communication often leads us to use shortcuts, overlook important details, and sometimes lose context altogether. Never confuse a short message with a clear message.



## **2. Communicate Your Mind:**

While we are sending any sort of formal messages, we need to see that the audience analysis is done as to the purpose of the message, expectation from the message on the part of the sender and the receiver.

## **3. Hold Your Horses:**

Efficient Leaders or Managers are the one who are empathetic listeners who keep aside their point of view while listening to others perspective. They need to persuade those who take time to think (introverts) and process their ideas during an online meeting comparatively with extroverts or the most loudest and confident people..

## **4. Assume the Best Intent:**

The messages sent through Digital Communication maybe through Oral or Written media, often may be misread leading to miscommunication. Dhawan says that when you interpret a message, assume the best about the message and have positive intention. Rather than giving rise to a doubt or framing up some passive and aggressive response, which has emerged out the message, it's a good idea to have a direct conversation with the person to prevent confusion.

## **5. Find Your Voice:**

At the workplace and all those who are connected to any Business organisations, be it- an employee, a customer, team members, all belong to different cultures having their own thought process and belief system. While we are working in a Hybrid mode we need to aware of the different cultural norms. This definitely would help in making our communication and the functioning of the organisation efficient. Besides, we need to pay attention to the introverts, extroverts, digital natives and digital adapters. Introverts need time to reflect while extroverts are more confident to present their view point, Digital natives who are more comfortable using digital channels for communication; comparatively the Digital adapters who are reluctant to digital technology prefer telephonic or face to face communication. S everyone as per their interests should be given the liberty to prefer their own choice of communication channel.

## **Conclusion:**

We are living in the Digital World. The manner and channels of communication have changed. We communicate through the digital devices such as Computers, tablets, Cell phones, Online Communication platforms. It is high time to navigate the novel reality of communication and developing the skills by adapting and following Digital Body Language to build trust and connectivity in the digital world. Cultivation of this skill will help us to communicate an array of

messages, expressions and emotions in an effective way. We need to be Digital Natives in the new normal communicate digitally through email, on screen by using digital tools and it is work in progress, where we will learn from every happenstance. Practice of Digital Body Language will upkeep the virtual work environment and behaviour resulting into enhanced productivity and a build a healthy workplace culture.

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