

# Conscious body language

Your most sensational soft skill

Kurt Larsson

**Atos**

KURT LARSSON

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**CONSCIOUS BODY  
LANGUAGE**  
**YOUR MOST SENSATIONAL  
SOFT SKILL**

Conscious body language: Your most sensational soft skill

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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 Peak hard skills</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Lack of trust, the current situation	8
1.2 Knowledge is no longer enough	10
1.3 Human doings versus human beings	10
1.4 Life in a spreadsheet	12
1.5 Digital versus analogue	13
1.6 Has management become an anachronism?	14
1.7 Leadership, the rising star	14
<b>2 Conscious body language, so what?</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 The advantage of becoming more human	17
2.2 Conscious health and well-being	17
2.3 The roots of behavior	19

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2.4	Motility versus mobility	20
2.5	Business consciousness	22
2.6	Becoming sensational	23
2.7	Understanding, a multidimensional word	25
<b>3</b>	<b>Sensational soft skills</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1	Presence	27
3.2	Inspiration	28
3.3	Gravity	29
3.4	Conscious touch	30
3.5	Consent	31
3.6	Congruency	31
3.7	Enjoyment	31
<b>4</b>	<b>Incorporating Conscious body language in the workplace</b>	<b>32</b>
4.1	Sensational leadership	32
4.2	Courageous selling	38
4.3	Inspiring and engaging presentations	42
4.4	Service you can feel	49
4.5	Teamwork: diversity through dialogue	50
<b>5</b>	<b>Conscious mastery</b>	<b>57</b>
5.1	Expertise and mastery	57
<b>6</b>	<b>A conscious and sensational future</b>	<b>60</b>
6.1	Beyond survival	61
6.2	Conclusion	61
	<b>About the author</b>	<b>64</b>

# INTRODUCTION

A very dear person to me was recently complaining about a nagging backache. This is a very intelligent person who is now retired from a successful career as business leader. In most cases he behaves as one of the wisest people I know. To fix the pain he went to his doctor. Yet the result of meeting his doctor was not to locate and resolve the cause of the backache, (which interestingly is situated directly opposite a rather large waistline). Instead it was to complain to the doctor that the painkillers he previously prescribed were not strong enough! Three days later and with the new prescription the problem was considered solved.

This little anecdote is offered as a symbol of how technology and the advice of an expert have replaced our need to listen closely and be responsible for our feelings and our bodies. Was the problem in this case solved or merely avoided? What happens if the technology (in this case, stronger painkillers) stops working? Most importantly, where is the drive to find the source of the pain and resolve it once and for all?

To function as it is designed, most of modern day life requires technology. In less than a generation technology has gone from an erratic and undependable but helpful accessory to the organizer, controller and analyzer of most things we do. More and more Technology seems to be shaping our behavior whether or not we are conscious of it. Often we just adjust to its increasing power and function without even questioning the consequences. In the process many of us act more and more as if we have forgotten the essence of what makes us human. That is to consciously feel.

Becoming more conscious of and working with your body language can add new and exciting dimensions to your professional as well as personal life. You can practice improving your sales, service, leadership and teamwork skills. You can use it to relax and better enjoy some quality time with friends and family. Your health will increase and stress levels decrease while learning more about how you and others function. By daring to go off-line to observe, sense and trust your intuition, all this information about you and everyone around you is available and waiting. Does this mean that someone else can also see and sense all this in you too? Absolutely!

Since cracking this code myself, I am just amazed how few people get the power and utility that is available using simple soft skills to gather information, make better decisions, plus create more profitable and enjoyable relationships. Your willingness and ability to learn about and understand the “language of the body” provides you this distinct edge.

Whether you lead, sell, serve or just communicate with others, learning the “language of the body” will give you much more power and control over your own situation and the relationships you create. More importantly, it will also give you both tools and insight into discovering and handling what other people are doing to manipulate your thoughts, beliefs and behavior. Yet, this will do very little good unless you understand the grounding principle of personal sovereignty. That it comes from within.

Begin using the skills offered herein to open up your inner core to experience and trust your own self-worth and knowledge. When you really start to have faith in and use those universal truths only found in the silence and peace of reflection, then you will really be calling the shots in your life. Enjoy!

# 1 PEAK HARD SKILLS

The harder “business as usual” world we have become used to is no longer satisfying our need for closeness, attention and personal contact. More and more we are looking for ways to express the feelings we have been trained to bottle up for so many years. Disciplines such as mindfulness, yoga, alternative and complimentary medicines, are teaching us skills that will help bring us back to a more relationship-oriented world, while soft skills and the use of conscious body language are again becoming integral to our health, success and peace of mind.

The challenge is that many of us alive today never learned these skills, or we have forgotten them because they have been suppressed for so long. We have been trained or conditioned to ignore our feelings in order to perform better. Some have even had their ability to feel medicated away to allow them to “cope” with their current situation. Society in general has become more concerned with the latest work project, fashion, gadget or gossip to leave little time to care about consciously taking inventory of our feelings. The result is that we have become used to living “unconsciously”. This is producing dire consequences to how we relate to each other and to the world.

On the business side, some leading decision makers are beginning to notice a diminishing rate of return on technological investment. More and more are starting to look seriously at using soft skills to lower worker stress, communicate better, increase performance, and create more loyal relationships. Could this be a trend that is worth investigating further? How can we profit from increasing our soft skills set as well as our ability to use them?

With any luck, when you finish reading this book you will feel uncomfortably inspired: inspired by the world we could create together by being more conscious of and sensitive to each other. Uncomfortable when you realize the extent of the personal evolution you may need to go through to get there. But here’s hoping that the rest of this text will provide you with a sense that the journey will be worth the sensational, relational “pot of gold” waiting at the end.

## 1.1 LACK OF TRUST, THE CURRENT SITUATION

We have recently completed the most destructive century in history. Some estimates put last century’s loss of human life, due to war alone, at over 100 million souls. This does not count all the men, women and children who died due to starvation, drought or any number of diseases we now know how to prevent.

It was also the century where the most-ever material wealth was created and – many would say – coveted. “He who dies with the most toys wins” is more than just a bumper sticker, it became a way of life. But we are now starting to see the financial, environmental and human devastation necessary to keep this way of life going.

We are now a little more than a decade into this new century/millennium; how does it feel?

With the advent of personal computing, the metrics we can now employ to accumulate and keep track of our piles of stuff seem almost as complex as the stuff itself. Indeed, our Cartesian ability to measure and calculate has pretty much engulfed mainstream thought, word and indeed behavior. Most Gen-X and Y-ers would be very hard pressed to work or even live without the use of their “Smart-stuff”. Which leads to the question who or what is smarter?

For those of us who are not on painkillers or antidepressants there seems to be a growing sense of uneasiness. Terms like “road rage” and “going postal” are vain attempts to put a smiley face on what has become an unforgiving world. Many of us are now straining under the stress.

A growing number who study the causes of this global restlessness, especially those with no axe to grind or wallet to fill, point to a breakdown in trust. The knowledge of ancient and formally trusted institutions is finally being questioned. Many of them have traditions so old that the origins are no longer known (or perhaps they have been conveniently forgotten?).

We don't continue to use outdated software on our computers when updates become available, so why do we maintain old traditions, superstitions and tragic prejudices that have been proven to have no rational or moral anchor?

This increased caution is also calling those in authority into question. Have some of them taken and used their high positions for personal gain rather than Public Service? Could faceless bureaucrats and charismatic technocrats, who were never elected but get to decide how we live, how much we are taxed and how to spend our money, have anything to do with our increasing levels of frustration and distrust? Do you like being told what to do?

Institutions, traditions and prejudices thrive in an environment of thinking without feeling. As a dearly departed friend once put it, “Policy replaces life” and we are now reaping the results. Stress is epidemic, dialogue is often replaced with “may the loudest voice win” debate and invitation has given way to ultimatum. *Dis-ease* is more common than *ease* and money seems to have become the measure of happiness, regardless of how happy it actually makes its owner. For example, what does “guilt money” have to do with spending quality time with your children? In fact, research has proven that coveting more money actually stimulates the brain in the same way that the rush from cocaine does. Yet how conscious of all this are you?

Much of what you will encounter in this book will not be supported by unassailable research or facts and that is precisely the point. The point is that this book is your open invitation to actually “sense” what is being presented and to feel and reflect for yourself. See how much of it resonates with your own inner voice of “common sense”. Sense here means to consciously feel, not just measure. Should you come to insights in line with those written herein, maybe you too are ready use part two to begin complimenting the drawers of your “hard skills” toolbox with some “soft” ones.

## 1.2 KNOWLEDGE IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

The current system has led many of us to believe that our identity is defined by the quantity of what we know and can recite. Starting with Renée Descartes famous phrase, “I think, therefore I am”, it became fashionable to arm ourselves with relevant facts, figures and convincing arguments. Reciting them back with determination was often enough to win your point convincingly. Knowledge became power and “Don’t believe it unless you can measure it” the rallying cry. If that didn’t work, then that same information accompanied with louder, more expressive “force of character” would usually prevail. If you still met resistance, then some good old-fashion brute force in the form of classic rhetoric, some well-crafted legislation, plus a gun and a badge, could eventually carry the day. At the same time, most of us were trained in public schools to accept this “go along to get along” strategy. With this institutionalization of thought as a background, it took exceptional character, fortitude and at times generations, to change public opinion or societal values. But what if this process too is both speeding up and becoming old and brittle?

With the advent of the Internet and the amazing access it offers to grass-roots knowledge, this ancient system of unquestioned top-down control is starting to crumble. Many are sensing a disconnect between their personal values and the information and explanations being offered. This constant stream of information is becoming so deafening and detached from common sense that more of us are beginning to question and distrust it. Indeed, look no further than what passes for modern finance where phrases such as “Quantitative Easing” and “Fractional Reserve Banking” are celebrated. Were you to try these at home you would quickly be arrested and charged with counterfeiting. What does an “armed peace” have to do with peace?

### **1.3 HUMAN DOINGS VERSUS HUMAN BEINGS**

How often do you hear yourself or someone you know complaining about all the things they need to do? Are you one of a growing number of people who has to stay busy because if you become idle you would quickly be overcome with a feeling of guilt? “What is it that I forgot to do?”

It often doesn't matter that you have earned a few brief minutes of respite, not to mention desperately needing some time “off-line”. The fear that something has been missed turns what could have been a few luscious, relaxing minutes into tense ones, frantically trying to remember what you may or may not have forgotten. These are a few tell-tale signs of being a “human doing”, that is someone who has been conditioned to measure their value by their performance and accomplishments.

#### **1.3.1 “DOING” IS GOOD**

There is nothing wrong with doing. Who wouldn't agree that if nothing is attempted, then nothing would be gained? Yet, how much is “doing” worth if you can no longer enjoy “being” calm for long enough to savor what you have achieved?

It gets worse. A good and very successful friend who is at least seventy years of age once admitted that the reason he still keeps pushing himself, long after he could have retired, is the fear of what he would think about with extra time on his hands. Do you have a friend or relative who, faced with idle time from retirement or becoming unemployed went into a severe depression? Here we have examples of good-hearted humans trapped so deeply in their “doing” that they are too uncomfortable and even too scared to just “be”. If this isn't slavery, then what is?

### 1.3.2 USE THEM OR LOSE THEM

It gets worse still. There are also those who have chosen to brush off, avoid or consciously shut down their feelings in order to do a job. Often it is a job that someone with normal feelings would find too stressful. Think of many in the banking and finance sector or many of the so-called “IT geeks”. Deep down, nearly all of these good-hearted people are probably just trying to get along in an environment that celebrates intelligent solutions over heart-felt experiences. These and many other intelligence-based professions seem to attract a greater proportion of introverted, anti-social personality types. The resulting system that has been created naturally leans to a more digital way of thinking and doing. In other words, the more you can boil down an issue into ones and zeros the easier it becomes to eliminate all the zeros. Now what if one of these disappearing zeros is your ability to feel?

Our society has elevated this type of (clinical) behavior to heroic proportions. For example, how many business titans or career politicians can you name who are still married to their first spouse? You may also laugh along with the characters on “The Big Bang Theory”, but what does the success of this comedy TV series say about the behaviors we accept, celebrate or just plain overlook?

Finally, there are those who simply lack feelings and morals and whose apathy can border on tragic or go directly to – pathological. Sociopaths and psychopaths look just like us but cannot or will not feel anything for others. Often they prey on those with feelings after having studied precisely what needs to be said in order to provoke the desired effect. What is most intriguing is that recent psychological research has indicated what you may also have already felt; the way a corporation is structured encourages sociopathic and psychopathic behavior. Do a Google search on “sociopathic” or “psychopathic” behavior and compare the behavioral signs to the environment in your organization. You may be surprised at just how similar they are.

So just what do human beings all have in common? Consciously or unconsciously they have chosen to focus their senses on activities that are more easily measured than felt. Some have actively chosen this left-brained path of achievement, while others have been trained or conditioned by their surroundings to follow sheepishly along. Want to look at a prime cause for all the stress-related dis-ease currently plaguing our society? Look no further than all those people you know who work in jobs where having empathy and compassion are seen as a disadvantage. Then you are invited to notice how many more jobs are now being “rationalized” in the same way.

With our collective focus on efficiency, even those who want to keep their dignity as human beings are often forced to compromise in order to compete. Has the expression, “It’s just business” become an accepted excuse for sociopathic behavior? Has doing good for others become an unaffordable luxury to many who still need to work for a living? Granted, there are many wonderful examples of people bucking this trend.

This book, as you will soon see, *really is* written to support being healthier, more prosperous and cooperative. Yet to really appreciate the opportunity for change before us, it may be worth spending a few conscious minutes reflecting on “life as we know it” from outside our current societal “fish bowl”.

## 1.4 LIFE IN A SPREADSHEET

So how did we begin cultivating this type of digital behavior? The Personal Computer revolution did not develop out of the hardware inside the box. Neither did it explode due to Bill Gates and his DOS Operating System. What sparked the PC revolution was Mitch Kapor’s spreadsheet program Lotus 123. This ingenious program unleashed an incredible personal calculating power and put it at the fingertips of any manager with a passion for numbers and performance. True to form, Bill Gates then “borrowed” the idea and went on to dominate the market with Excel.

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the power of this revolution to become overused in the name of efficiency. Those focused on rational intelligence and statistics became more in demand than those with heartfelt empathy. Terms like re-engineering the company and “trimming organizational fat” became mantras and it wasn’t too long before all the fat was trimmed and cut marks on the bone began to show. Ask anyone getting close to retirement who still has a job and nearly all will tell you they are responsible for a workload which two or three people managed a generation ago. Is it any wonder that stress and burnout are soaring?

A generation ago, the average worker depended on his own skills to accomplish his job. If the system went down, out came a piece of paper and work went on. Now the workplace is engulfed by automated business systems and we have slowly and often unwittingly become parts of the machine. Most workers under 40 have no experience of working in an office where “the System” is not in charge. Just about every process has been documented and streamlined and moments are constantly measured, checked and improved. How much work gets done now when “The System” goes down? That “The System” rules the workplace is scary from a “crash” perspective, but also from the perspective of how it is affecting how we behave. What should be most frightening to this whole process is the blank stare you get if you ask someone if they are worried about technology’s encroachment onto our personal freedom and expression. Most are just fine with current “business as usual”.

Also, please consider the amount of painkillers, anti-depressants and stomach remedies that are being consumed have reached all time highs.

On the other hand, compare yourself to a two-year-old. How much room do you feel you have to express your thoughts and feelings in contrast to the child? Also ask yourself who usually gets a better night’s sleep?



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What if our society has indeed become one giant spreadsheet where someone is constantly controlling, measuring and analyzing everything in order to maximize its performance? What if that someone is not you? Is it any wonder you may be feeling just a bit boxed in?

Interesting how each of those confining little boxes in a spreadsheet is called a “cell”.

#### **1.4.1 DECISIONS CAUSE STRESS**

Go into a grocery store and count the number of choices you now have when buying a bottle of detergent, a loaf of bread or some cereal. How easy is it to responsibly check all the offers and choices with which you are confronted? How long would it take to read each bottle, compare its offer and make a rational decision based upon your needs and wants?

With all the fine print, fancy chemical names and price comparisons, it would probably take you all day to decide on just one item on your list.

In this situation it is much easier to use those habitual neural pathways and grab the same bottle or loaf you always do and be done with it. Yet, how do you really know you made the right choice? For many this just increases the stress, regardless of what arrives home. Is it any wonder that many of us collapse in front of the Television after work, totally exhausted from our day?

What would it feel like instead to come home satisfied, consciously relax by taking some time for yourself to reflect over, integrate and complete the day’s events before getting a good night’s sleep?

Stress research conducted by Dr Alexander Parsky at Stockholm’s Karolinska Institute has shown that this conscious choice to take some contemplative moments between work and sleep, where you can reflect over and integrate your day’s events allows for a much more restful night’s sleep. Yet, how often do you work to the point of exhaustion, only to wake up and do it again?

This type of stressful behavior creates neural superhighways too!

## 1.5 DIGITAL VERSUS ANALOGUE

Much of our office behavior has become digitized. The way we work must be in byte-sized chunks: Bulleted lists, executive summaries, sales funnels, bar codes, apps and just about everything we do must be as efficient and effective as possible. Not only that, the line between work and free time has grown very fuzzy with the advent of the smart device. Now you can receive all your communication 24/7, allowing your boss and customers access to you whenever it is necessary, or not...

With all of the advances allowing us to track, quantify and analyze our every procedure, we are now part of a process. This is only the first step as now many traditional jobs are rapidly being replaced by machines and computers that contain increasingly sophisticated hardware and software. Even the cashier and burger flipper are now being threatened by automation! Most everyone in a big company now has an identification card that tracks your behavior. RFID (Radio Frequency ID) chips are becoming increasingly common too. Which truck or taxi driver is not being tracked wherever they go?

The analogue way of doing things is considered old fashioned. Taking the time to reflect or to “sleep on the issue” may not be as accepted by your colleagues as working late to solve it. Peer pressure often sides with increased performance over common sense. Take too long finishing your sentence and someone will often jump in and finish it for you. Without even asking, they will often consider this a service to you. In many organizations people take vacation instead of sick leave to give the impression that they are tough, can take “it” or out of fear of being seen as weak. Just about every want ad is not complete without the line “must be able to handle stress”. The more you can break your tasks down so each moment of the process can be measured and exceeded, the better your chances of staying after the next inevitable reorganization. We are becoming items, things, i.e. “Human Resources” rather than individuals and most of us are not even aware of the change.

## 1.6 HAS MANAGEMENT BECOME AN ANACHRONISM?

Our current definition of a manager makes no distinction between heading up a group of products or people. What if it is time to consciously make that distinction clear? The word “management” comes from “manos”, which means “hands” and the idea of managing comes from a time of scarcity when you needed a certain number of hands or backs to get something done. Yet even today, anyone who can manage to squeeze just a bit more performance out of a group or process by the end of the quarter is usually singled out for the promotional fast track. There is often only little or “polite” attention given to the wellbeing of the individuals involved in that process.

Could the idea of a manager of people be an anachronism, a dinosaur left over from the Industrial Age? This is when distinguishing between machines and the people who ran them was of no economical importance. Even now most managers are paid in relation to what they can produce.

## 1.7 LEADERSHIP, THE RISING STAR

What if it is time to cleanly distinguish and even separate the term management from leadership? Unlike a good manager who efficiently uses scarce resources to reach goals, regardless of obstacles (human or otherwise), an effective leader inspires and empowers people to be more and do more than they thought they could. What if the sensational leader goes one step further and encourages everyone to appreciate a job well done and applauds goals that are met? Analytical skills are still important, but software can handle that much better. Isn't a boss who can inspire and motivate you to want to perform more important than one who is your baby sitter and monitors your every move?

We now have a choice. The future we create together can either be a dark one where we all manage each other till the effects of stress, distrust and dis-ease become too much to bear. Or, we can create a world where we listen with all our senses, encourage and empower those around us to be the best that we can be. Being conscious of the power of your body language and being in touch with your feelings will certainly help you choose the most effective path.

### 1.7.1 BUT LIFE WORKS WHY CHANGE IT?

How many times have we heard that we are creatures of habit? Could it be that we are programmed that way? A basic understanding of biology will confirm that our nervous system is in fact designed to create behavior patterns. The more we do or think the same type of thoughts, the larger and quicker that neurological path becomes through our nervous system. The larger the path, the easier and more effective it becomes to do/think the same thing again and again. Please note that this process has nothing to do with the quality, effectiveness or morality of the behavior pattern in question. So when a change or adjustment is introduced, our natural wiring predisposes us to discount, resist, ignore or avoid it. Should it persist we will often actively defend against it. Why?

### 1.7.2 MORE EFFORT REQUIRED

Just like it takes less time and effort to use a superhighway than a back road, using the neural pathways already widened for quick and economical access will provide you the path of least resistance. Here is an invitation for reflection: do you use your car's cruise control more on the highway or on a back road?

But, is the net energy effect really less using these habitual and comfortable behavior patterns? Take a step back and consider the additional amount of energy we use to:

- Maintain old behaviors and habits long after they have outlived their original purpose.
- Discount, avoid or defend our habit from someone close that recognizes it and tries to warn us of its consequences.
- Clean up the mess we make in sticking to our habits even after the point of obvious and cataclysmic failure.

Take smoking, overeating, domestic violence as obvious examples. Almost everyone who is guilty of these behaviors knows they have tragic consequences for themselves and for those around them, yet have you ever landed in an argument with someone after suggesting to them a change?

You may even sense that they too know their arguments are weak, yet they persist. It might just feel easier to them – and somehow more pleasurable – to continue reacting unconsciously to the same thing over and over again rather than changing it. Shall we look at politics, finance and war?

## 2 CONSCIOUS BODY LANGUAGE, SO WHAT?

The Industrial Age has been replaced by the knowledge or computer age where most, if not all, of the traditional tasks of management can be accomplished with so-called “management software”. In fact, Peter Siljerud, the Director of Futurewise AB puts it this way. *“Soon anything requiring the use of muscle will be done with robotics and anything requiring intelligence will be done with computers”*. “If this is true, what skills will be needed in the future to maintain your value in the marketplace?”

The answer will probably have to do with all the skills that focus on emotion, feeling and cultivating relationships. Professions requiring leadership, service, dialogue and teamwork will be high on the list. Yet, how effective will you be in such a post if you are missing the skills to consciously, responsibly and understandably emote your feelings through your body and its language?

### 2.1 THE ADVANTAGE OF BECOMING MORE HUMAN

A good metaphorical start to this answer may be the differences between seeing a black and white picture compared to a color one of the same scene. It can also feel like the difference between admiring the clinical perfection of digitally mastered music compared to the warm feelings evoked from hearing an old analogue stereo LP record. A friend, standing in front of his mint condition 1968 Juke Box playing an Elvis 45 once remarked, “You could put your feet in front of the speaker and feel the song’s warmth”. Compare that to the clinically, sterile perfection of a CD or MP3.

Consciously choosing to access your feelings may be uncomfortable. For instance during a Tsunami, it may permit you to feel the gut feeling, to follow all the animals and their instincts to higher ground when all the water on an Asian beach disappears out to sea. But will you honor and act upon that signal, especially when many of your fellow species have decided to walk further out on the beach to see where the water went?

It may also provide you with more pertinent feedback from your senses, which you could use to better sell, present, lead, service and create contagious team spirit. The difference boils down to either opening up those parts of yourself that define us as being human or shutting them down to become a better-looking, more intelligent machine.

## 2.2 CONSCIOUS HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Being conscious of your body and its language will re-open a portal to the senses that should have never been closed. If you have paid even a small amount of attention to how it works, your body has an incredible ability to heal itself. Just watch what happens when you get a cut.

Yet this ability to heal only really shows itself when we consciously get out of its way. A great illustration of this is during the Civil War in the USA. Doctors, using the latest medical information, intentionally ripped scabs off wounded soldiers as they thought the wound would heal faster when left open. This was the cutting edge of medical science! How much of what is considered cutting edge in medicine today will also eventually go the way of “leeching”?

Your body behaves surprisingly similar to how you behave personally. Just like you, if it is listened to in a way that it feels heard then the problem often decreases or disappears. If the problem or pain is ignored, your body (just like you) will increase the energy and resources used (pain and discomfort) until its message is heard, understood and acted upon.

Some simplified examples:

- Smoke too much and you develop a cough. Ignore the cough and continue to smoke and increase your risk for lung cancer and emphysema.
- Eat too much, exercise too little and you gain weight. Ignore these consequences and continue with this behavior then you increase your chances to get even larger.
- Read a lot and you will eventually need a pair of glasses. Continue reading more and the power of the corrective lenses will increase.
- Exercise a lot unconsciously while ignoring what your body is feeling and you will run the risk of wearing out some important body parts. Continue ignoring your body's signals and plan on some prosthetics.
- Worry a lot and you will probably create excess acid in your digestive tract. Continue worrying and the risk of developing an ulcer increases as a result.
- Persuade your friends to do stuff they would rather not and they will begin avoiding you. Continue persuading them and watch your friends vanish.

In each one of the simplified examples ignoring the consequences of your behavior will produce some fairly obvious results. What about looking at the positive side?

- Try listening more closely and marvel at how much more even strangers will share from their personal lives.
- Serve more and sell less and watch how your loyal customers begin warmly and spontaneously marketing you and your product.
- Eat more responsibly and watch how you begin to feel better and regain a more attractive waistline.
- Save more and spend less and watch how much more wealth you accumulate.
- Listen to and consciously respect your body more and feel how many old aches and pains begin to dissipate.
- Smile and greet everyone as an old and trusted friend and enjoy the way they treat you back.

What if the golden rule is alive and well and applying it consciously on your body, your relationships and your life can create some astounding results?

## 2.3 THE ROOTS OF BEHAVIOR

More and more evidence is appearing that points towards our sub-conscious residing in our body's individual cells. There is now mounting evidence from the likes of Dr Bruce Lipton in his book "The Biology of Belief" and Dr Candace Pert in her book "The Molecules of Emotion" that each cell in our body has the capacity for communication and memory.

### Try this out:

If you are feeling a bit low or depressed, notice the position of your head in relation to your body and the pull of gravity on it. Is your head sticking straight up, resting easily upon your shoulders or drooping forward? Are you relaxed or are you straining your neck and throat muscles to fight gravity in order to keep your head bent forward?

Chances are that if your head is drooping forward you are not feeling as happy as you could be feeling.

Now try closing your eyes. Enjoy a few deep and relaxing breaths while slowly moving your head to a more upright position. Consciously notice the effect on the muscles in your neck and throat. Sense where they begin to feel at ease and note the position of your head with respect to the line of gravity through your body. Take a deep breath and open your eyes and observe your head's relation to your body. Rest your head there squarely, effectively and comfortably upon your shoulders. Notice if you feel the same or more or less depressed?

If you are like most people, finding this natural resting place where you use gravity instead of muscle to hold your head up, will result in a lighter and more buoyant feeling through your entire body. Think also about how much energy you are now saving by letting your body utilize gravity. How will you use all this freed-up power?

### **2.3.1 WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?**

Cells communicate in a number of ways. One way is known as tunneling. When two cells are next to each other, certain proteins are exchanged between them. This is the conversation. When a behavior is repeated, these cells get used to being next to each other; it begins to feel normal. The conversation takes on a familiar pattern as the same proteins are exchanged again and again. Should those cells shift position, one cell rolling a little higher or lower, a different exchange of proteins results, resulting in a different conversation.

By moving your head just a little bit more in line with gravity, for instance, you have now shifted the cells in your neck muscles into a new constellation, and probably a happier one. Why happier? Look at small children. How do they hold their heads when first learning the joy of standing and walking?

### **2.3.2 HOW HAPPY ARE THEY?**

Now look what happens to our posture, as we get older, wiser (and often more depressed). Could we actually start to hang our heads forward as more and more thoughts weigh us down? That may be one explanation. There are probably as many others as there are personalities. The point is that it is much more normal to hang your head down when feeling down or depressed and it is much more normal to hold it up when you feel light and happy.

#### **The take away from this simple exercise**

If you still have the muscle tone to consciously raise your head up when you decide, then what should you do when you want to feel a bit happier?

What's stopping you?

This is just one simple example of the power and leverage you possess when you consciously choose to adjust your body language.

Also, unlike most drugs, there are no side effects to this simple adjustment. There are many other small adjustments available with your hands, fingers, feet etc. that can directly influence how you feel, as well as what you project and who you attract.

By the way, did you notice how quickly you went back to your “business as usual” way of holding up your head?

## 2.4 MOTILITY VERSUS MOBILITY

Let's say you just sprained your wrist. To heal it, you can walk around for weeks using the sling, keeping you and your wrist immobile the whole time. Then you can go to a therapist to begin rehabilitating your ability to move it freely. With any luck, in a few months you will be as good as new. Or...

You can begin consciously, softly and respectfully exercising your wrist joint, paying close attention to exactly where and how the pain is expressed. Breathing slowly and joyously will also increase your presence to what is going on within your hurting joint.

After a skiing accident where I stretched the muscles in my upper back and, according to the Doctor, "came as close to breaking my neck as I could", I did exactly this. From the moment I landed I began breathing slowly and consciously. I consciously began to listen, and feel where and how much (not very much) I could move through my injury. I slowly began to exercise my strained back, ever so gently testing my limits of pain and actively seeking ways to enjoy the process. Although it still took over a month, I ended up with more flexibility in my back than before the accident. I was also left with a generous portion of unneeded prescription painkillers.

Moving energy through the injured joint is known as motility. Moving the joint around is called mobility. One has a healing effect whereas the other has mostly a transportation effect.

But what does this process have in common with the various ways of dealing with a taxing emotional issue? You can move the issue around and thus avoid it, using the mobility effect, or you can consciously address it and solve it by respectfully going through it and finding its source. Motility will produce a lasting effect, Mobility will just "kick the (issue in the) can" further down the road.

Using painkillers is an accepted form of "can kicking". Think about it. Your body is screaming for you to pay attention sometimes to the point of excruciating pain.

Your response?

You take a pill to deaden the pain, often to continue doing the same unconscious action that caused your discomfort in the first place. What is the definition of insanity again?

Could you be one of those people who needs to get a physician's advice before you will officially recognize a recurring pain?

I know of someone who shamed their physician into prescribing stronger painkillers instead of even attempting to locate the cause of the pain!

How conscious is this type of behavior and at what point do you replace your responsibility for your body's health and wellbeing with input from an outside source?

Used correctly, medicine and mobility (usually in the form of immobilization) can drastically compliment your healing process, but who is ultimately in charge of getting better? On the advice of our physician we use them, often unconsciously and automatically, without accurately surveying the seriousness of the situation ourselves. Add to this all the marketing and advertising pressure we receive, aimed to make you blindly trust your favorite pill (and generate big pharma profits) over your own internal compass, and you may begin to see more of the challenges facing your bid to become more conscious.



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Likewise, moving around or avoiding irritating issues, conversations and people may relieve the pain momentarily, but consciously addressing the situation and going slowly and respectfully through the pain to reach the other side will go further, faster to dissipate or eliminate the problem at its source. In the end, it is you and no one else who is responsible for your conscious motility or often unconscious mobility. Ask your physician for advice but remember that he/she is there to serve you.

## 2.5 BUSINESS CONSCIOUSNESS

Being with and honoring your feelings can provide you with a rich new dimension of business intelligence. This offers you the potential to:

- Lead more effectively and make more comprehensive decisions
- Present in a way that emotionally “moves” your listeners towards a desired action
- Sell in a collaborative way, which encourages customers to warmly and spontaneously recommend you and your product to others
- Serve others in a way that rebuilds their loyalty by making them feel seen, heard and understood
- Increase teamwork by consciously addressing all the synergies that benefit your team and its spirit.

All these benefits begin to occur when you honor your personal integrity while powerfully, respectfully and appropriately expressing what your “gut” is sensing and feeling.

As discussed, our collective focus on technology has disconnected a good number of us from our ability to be with and honor our feelings. But some of us wish to learn more about life and gain a competitive edge by gathering more “sensible” information. What if practicing conscious body language is the most effective and sensible vehicle to do this?

Top decision makers have also begun to recognize the power and leverage available in the feeling dimension and are actively seeking this type of training for their sales and management teams. People involved with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have also begun to recognize the importance of becoming more conscious of the power of CSR. Young consumers especially are choosing to shop in a more environmentally responsible way from companies that support and encourage this trend. Exercising your vote with a conscious wallet is becoming a powerful voice in this process.

And what if being more conscious of your body and its language can be used at home?

- How do you think it will affect your children if they feel more seen, heard, understood and loved?
- How will it affect you if they feel more comfortable “being” in your presence?
- Can a soft and tender hug be a more powerful complement to healing a sick family member than an extra pill stuffed with ingredients you can’t pronounce?
- What is there to learn by consciously imitating a loved one’s body language and feeling its effect?

When my oldest daughter was about four months old my wife decided to go back to gym. It was late and both my daughter and I were tired. Not surprisingly, the second my wife shut the front door my daughter started screaming. From that moment on, no matter what I tried, she continued to scream. After a while we were both totally frustrated and exhausted. It was then that she began to breathe in a strange fashion. Short punctuated inhales followed by a long exhale.

Curious from my body language training, I began to imitate her. I quickly began to consciously feel how tense and sore my lower back was. She continued and I followed. Slowly I began to feel the tension in my back loosening up. I began to feel lighter and started to smile. Not long after that, I realized that the pain was gone and my whole lower back felt warmer and more flexible than it had been for a while. Best of all, when I looked into my arms that my lovely daughter was sound asleep.

- What happened here?
- Who was teaching whom?
- Were these events just a coincidence?

After that night I began to imitate her more often. Many other similar incidents occurred, often with the same sort of result.

Now compare that story with this fact: one of the most common reasons convicted criminals give for choosing a life of crime is that they did not feel seen, heard or loved when growing up. How could you positively influence the future crime rate with this bit of information and some relevant soft skills?

## 2.6 BECOMING SENSATIONAL

We know that being sensational has to do with using your senses, but it may be worth looking in more detail at what else the word actually means.

### 2.6.1 SENSE: TO MEASURE

The deeper we get into technology the more different types of sensors are appearing. Sensors are used to measure change. They are getting both more common and sensitive every day. Sensing something in a way that measures and compares it to something else is an important use of the word, but let's not limit ourselves to just this.

### 2.6.2 SENSE: AS IN COMMON SENSE

Although a quick look at any newspaper headlines will probably confirm our society's lack of common sense, this is still a valid way to use this word. Having some kind of inner compass to help discern moral and acceptable social behavior is a big plus if you plan on enjoying the company of other human beings. The more you can cultivate this inherent ability, the more grounded and in touch with reality you will probably feel.

### 2.6.3 SENSE: TO FEEL

Finally, being able to feel what is going on in a specific situation or being able to intuit what another person, or group of people, are feeling is an important use of this word. This dimension of the word "sense" describes more than a process that measures changes in hot or cold or different shades of grey, it allows us to:

- Feel more of what is going on within our own bodies
- Listen in a way that makes others feel seen, heard and understood
- Intuit (in to it) more deeply into what we and others are feeling
- Empathize with others in a way that they can feel and be comforted by
- Express ourselves in a respectful way allowing others more access to what we truly feel

What is it in our biology that makes this ability possible?

### 2.6.4 THE ENDOCRINE AND NERVOUS SYSTEM

The Endocrine System is a system of glands in our bodies that produce different hormones. These allow us to feel something or have some sort of intuitive experience. The more open we are to being able to feel what is going on around us, as well as within, the more information we are going to be able to access and process. This can make a major contribution to both our self-awareness and ability to consciously *respond* to our surroundings.

This is a completely different system from the Nervous System that is more electromagnetic by design and, therefore, much quicker and more *reactive*.

The more we can sensually distinguish these two different, often competing as well as complementing systems from each other, the better we will become at focusing on the most effective system at the most appropriate time. A quick primer on the difference may be:

- The Nervous System is quick and most effective in fight, flight or freeze situations involving danger or injury. When a quick reaction is necessary, this system literally becomes an automatic “no brainer” reaction.
- The Endocrine System takes a longer time to engage. Once stimulated, specific glands respond by secreting appropriate hormones into the blood stream. This causes us to feel something that we can then respond to, correct or adjust. This system is more effective in social situations where our feelings can help make a difference to ourselves and others.

This, of course, is an extremely oversimplified explanation, but the bottom line is, if you need a quick, automatic reaction, your nervous system will usually provide it before you even ask. If you want to respond after surveying your feelings and reflecting over something, then you probably want to consciously engage your endocrine system. Keep reading to learn about a few of many simple, but *sensational soft skills* available to help accomplish this.

## 2.7 UNDERSTANDING, A MULTIDIMENSIONAL WORD

Could “understanding” be the next step, moving beyond knowledge, and the key to a sensational life?

Understanding, which has been defined by Kjell Enhagen as “knowledge mixed into an emotional cocktail”, may indeed be making a comeback. More people seem to be waking up to the limits of just knowing about a subject and being able to recite it back when needed. Asking what makes something tick and why provides more depth and understanding. Indeed, some of the teaching methods employed in schools now stress the importance of understanding the point being taught. Maybe because of this younger people are now searching for understanding and daring to ask those ancient “elephant in the room” questions. These are those obvious ones that have been, for so long, politely and successfully avoided.

There is such a powerful, three-dimensional beauty to the word “understanding”. It metaphorically suggests something well-anchored or embodied from *underneath*. Something with a meaning you can *stand* for. Compare this to the metaphor of placing something you “*know*” on a high, distant and often inaccessible “*ledge*”. Which would you more easily trust?

What if just knowing something is no longer good enough? Would your friends, customers and even loved ones become more grateful if you could explain an issue in a way that provides them with an understandable background? To do this will require the right mix of intelligence and emotion. Getting this recipe right will be much easier when you practice accessing your feelings and intuition in a deeper and more effective way.

With these two first chapters as background you now have a “Matrix-like” choice. You can stop reading here, go back to your favorite technological gadget and chalk up what you have read as entertainment.

Or

You can continue and discover some of the sensational soft skills and practices available to set you on your path to conscious body language mastery.

Here's to seeing you on the next page!

# 3 SENSATIONAL SOFT SKILLS

It may finally be time to re-introduce and re-charge these simple words as powerful tools that we can use to access our humanity and:

- Use to further distinguish the qualities that truly make us human beings
- Create closer and better relationships
- Achieve more, which will benefit others as well as ourselves
- Enjoy life and all it has to offer more deeply and grandly

Most of what will be presented here can, at first glance, appear very pedestrian, but that would be the same as missing the importance of a tall building's foundation. It may not look so sexy, but what happens to the building if it fails? If you're musical then you may want to think about how flat your favorite song would sound without the bass and drums. I encourage you read on and to pause often, reflect a bit deeper and begin to feel what it is that makes these skills so valuable, timeless and useful.

Whether you are:

- Selling something
- Presenting an important message
- Serving someone else
- Encouraging others to follow you
- Trying to inspire a group of people to become a team or,
- Just looking to get a bit more out of life

Learning to understand and practically apply the following soft skills in a way that you and others can actually feel will transform you and your message from "business as usual" into something sensational!

The more you commit to understanding and using these tools, the more they will reward you.

## 3.1 PRESENCE

If you are thinking about: lunch, paying your bills, that thing you know you forgot, your next meeting, the girl or boy you just met, or any number of other thoughts that might be floating around in your head, then congratulations!

You have officially been distracted and are currently out of the present.

Presence is the opposite to what was described above; it's about opening up to the possibility unfolding before you -right here and now. It's about having all your facilities poised and at the ready to respond as quickly and powerfully necessary. The more you can distinguish the sense of presence from being distracted or hijacked by other thoughts, the more you will be open to receive the "presents" it offers.

The key to being present is feeling. The more you dare to feel, the more present you will become. The simple fact is that the only time you can feel anything – be it butterflies in your stomach, a crick in the neck, that nagging headache, your old football injury, happiness, sadness, anger, joy, etc. is – here and now – in present time.

### **3.2 INSPIRATION**

Inspire comes from Latin and means to "breathe in Spirit". Breathing in Spirit is actually the advanced version as just the process of inhaling more air can make a very inspiring difference.

Our voices act like wind instruments. Just as a clarinet or tuba sounds richer and becomes more responsive when there is more air flowing through it, so do we. Breathing more will allow us to better express our messages. In both cases, the more molecules or cells you can get vibrating with either your musical or verbal message, the more people will be attracted to listen.

A simple test, sit comfortably and say, "Hello, my name is..."

Observe and sense your level of conscious engagement.

How much of your body felt inspiring and actually resonated with your message?

What percentage of your body's cells did you feel vibrating with what you had to say?

Now, sit or stand up straight, take a few deep breaths and from the top of your third one say, "Hello, my name is..."

What difference do you notice in the resonance and power of your voice?

Is more of your chest – and you – now vibrating with your message?

How is your energy level now?

What changed?

You straightened up and opened up more lung capacity. You then inhaled more deeply causing more energy to vibrate and flow through more of you. In short, you became inspired. Which way of talking sounded and felt more inspiring and believable?

Which one resonated more of you with your message?

If you noticed a difference do you think those listening to an inspiring you will too?

What if the key to inspiring others into action begins by inspiring yourself, and that the process is as simple as taking in more air? You are, of course, invited to breathe in more spirit too. You may find that your message starts to resonate even more. For starters though, just working with plain old air will be an adequate and distinct start.

Can this little, inspiring tip be useful for the following:

- Presenting your message or inspiring someone to buy something from you?
- Adding more believability when inspiring others to follow you and your lead?
- Engaging and motivating your team better?
- Calming down an upset customer more effectively?

Try it and see if it works.

### 3.3 GRAVITY

One of the most powerful and effective healing forces we have at our disposal is the unobstructed flow of gravity. Being seen as “grounded” or stable is still seen as a positive attribute for a leader or decision maker. Yet, what does it really mean and how can you use gravity to become grounded?

Just because you are standing upright does not necessarily mean that you are effectively using gravity. An obvious example of this is the fact that many of us lock our knees. Stand up and lock yours now and sense the mighty strain it puts on your lower back. Also observe the amount of contact you have with the ground beneath your feet. Do you feel more or less stable? Your skeleton was designed to help hold you up, but not alone. Using your muscles to hold your body up with the added support of your skeleton is a much more efficient way to stand. It will not only keep your muscles and joints in better condition for a longer time, it will also give you a greater sense of contact with the ground.

Test it by breathing more consciously, standing up straight and softening your knees and back as much as you can.

The Native North Americans think of trees as Ambassadors between Father Heaven and Mother Earth. With their leaves embracing the sky and their roots firmly embedded in the ground, the trunks can then grow straight, thick and mighty. Taking this analogy a step further, the Native Americans think of humans as walking trees, with our head touching the heavens and our feet firmly in touch with the ground.

Take a few deep breaths and relax your body a bit more on each breath. Allow your muscles to relax and soften and use them to support yourself in line with gravity. Now you can test standing and walking with a more conscious sense of connectedness between heaven and earth. Observe what happens to your mood. If you can walk towards a mirror test this and compare it to the way you normally walk. Which posture looks more grounded and attracts your interest most?

Another useful tip is to place about 70 percent of your weight on the pads of your feet and spread the remaining 30 percent from the backs of your heals to the tips of your toes. Done correctly you will be able to slowly and with controlled grace lift yourself straight up. This way you can elevate yourself more in line with gravity without falling forward or backward in the process. This is known as standing “up-right”.

Should you feel a tendency to want to fall forward or backward, notice where you feel tense. This is known as standing “up-tight”. To correct this, soften up your knees, hips and back further, maybe crouch a bit more at the knees and try lifting yourself again. When you can easily come up on the pads of your feet and graciously touch down over and over again you will be on your way to using gravity’s power to its fullest. Your joints will last longer too.

When you are first using the flow of gravity correctly, you will probably become a bit sore in your calf muscles. This is a confirmation that you are now standing upright correctly. After a few days of practice this soreness will go away as you keep training. Keep practicing. If you were suffering from pain in your lower back, you may begin to feel less and less bothered by it.

Again, your body is your responsibility. So if you are unsure if this will help or hinder your posture you may still want to contact a trustworthy physician.

### Application:

For those of you who stand a lot during the day, practicing this method of standing and walking should help keep your back in better shape, as well as keep you healthy and more attractive. For those of you who occasionally have to stand in the booth at an Expo or fair, standing upright will give you much more energy and minimize the stress/resulting pain in your lower back. Here too, the choice of whether or not to use this process is ultimately up to you.

### 3.4 CONSCIOUS TOUCH

One example: do you have any idea how much information can be found in a handshake?

If you are like most of us, this time-honored tradition has become a fully automated process requiring hardly any conscious thought to achieve. We shake hands automatically and rarely put any conscious thought into what information this most basic human connection can provide.



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Soften up your hand and endeavor to feel the fluids sloshing around in the cells of your hand. Then consciously extend this now vibrant appendage to the person you are greeting. This type of greeting will usually cause a distinct change in their face and eyes. This conscious handshake skill is amazing at transforming a human doing back into a human being. Talk about an “attention getter”.

There is so much more information and trust to project available from a correctly executed handshake and if this arouses your interest there is much more to learn.

### **3.5 CONSENT**

Getting permission prevents intrusion into your listener’s personal space. Whereas, intruding into someone else’s space is one of the most effective ways to encourage distrust and increase their need to defend themselves from you and your message.

Just as marketing on the Internet works best with permission, so does our ability to communicate face-to-face. Becoming more aware of how your listener reacts to what you say, combined with your body language, will give you more of a chance to adjust it and encourage maximum reception in your listener.

Yes, there are still overbearing people out there who lead or sell by taking “conversational hostages” or intimidating those around them. Using fear has been a common practice to manage others for generations. Yet, could this method be losing its effectiveness too? Especially when dealing with younger adults who were brought up in the “anything goes” ’80s and ’90s? Try intimidating them and see how effective it is. They are used to getting their way and when they don’t, they have very little problem with getting loud and intimidating as well.

Practicing invitation instead of ultimatum will give you much more room in a sales, leadership or service context. The more you offer a choice, the more likely you are to invite and encourage your listener to choose to listen and consent to your message.

### **3.6 CONGRUENCY**

Getting your thoughts, words and body language in line and aimed towards a common goal, down to a cellular level, describes the process of getting congruent. The more each cell in your body consciously resonates with your message and is grounded in your beliefs, the more authentic and believable you and your message become.

Mixed Messages are the opposite. Sending out your message before your words are in alignment with your thoughts and your body language is a good way to sabotage your intention. Whether you do this consciously or unconsciously, the effect will be felt in your listener causing, at the very least, confusion and at worst, fear, mistrust or resentment.

### **3.7 ENJOYMENT**

The more you have fun with what you do the more you will increase the attractiveness of your message. Whether leading, selling or serving others, the more you resonate enjoyment, the more contagious your message will become. Retaining your ability to poke fun at yourself is often cited as an attribute for High Ambition Leaders by the center of the same name.

We all have mirror neurons. They are instrumental in our ability to learn by doing through imitation. These particular neurons seek to help us mirror our surroundings. If we have sadness and depression around, then these special neurons will mirror that, making us feel sad and depressed also. If we surround ourselves with joy we will mirror that too.

# 4 INCORPORATING CONSCIOUS BODY LANGUAGE IN THE WORKPLACE

Incorporating literally means, “to combine into one body”. Whether this has to do with your organizational body, your team’s body, your own body, or all three, the suggestion is that soft skills will integrate easier and more efficiently with a good dose of consciousness.

Each one of the above soft skills provides you with more access to being conscious here and now. They work best when they are applied to specific situations. Below is a small taste of some such opportunities. The more you take on practicing these skills, the more new dimensions in health, wealth and relationships will open up for you and your colleagues.

## 4.1 SENSATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The word sensational means both using the senses as well as being fantastic. Sensational Leadership implies that you are also listening and sensing in a way that encourages others to follow. There is absolutely no force or coercion necessary when you are attracting followers sensationaly. Authentically attracting followers with sensational leadership can and will make you feel more vulnerable, but is that something to fear?

Being sensational makes you vulnerable. In the Western world we often think of vulnerability as meaning weak. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Vulnerability has to do with having all your senses, resources and energy at your disposal. You are relaxed, open and ready to take on whatever threat or opportunity presents itself. In fact, for those seeking to master their discipline in the world of martial arts, vulnerability is the most sought-after state to handle both threats and opportunities.

### 4.1.1 AUTHENTICALLY ATTRACTING FOLLOWERS

Authenticity is such a refreshing quality and skill. When you are with someone who feels authentic it becomes much easier to be receptive to the message. Authentic leaders are often very captivating as there are still so few of them. Hubris, ego and pretense are so common and accepted that it is easy to forget what authenticity is.

Many decision makers have been trained to manage and dominate rather than lead. It is much easier to manage out of fear and bravery than it is to lead by inspiration. Therefore, the more you dare to open up and show yourself as a vulnerable human being, the easier it will be to appear different, even refreshing. Test being authentic yourself and speak your truth with the help of the following tips:

**Relax.** One of the easiest tips for becoming more authentic is to relax into your role as a leader. Many leaders think that they have to appear stiff in their body language and formal in mannerisms to “command” respect. People are recognizing that this is often just pretentious bravado to hide weakness and to create a dominant role that no one dares question. Again, what if younger people are no longer willing to subscribe to this unwritten law of blindly following inauthentic authority?

The best way to avoid being labeled stiff or inauthentic is not to be stiff or inauthentic. Simple as it sounds, if you have been conditioned to behave this way for most of your life it can be quite a challenge to change. It is not complicated and, if you have the will, it is no harder than quitting smoking or losing weight. It just takes discipline and persistence.

**Be transparent.** With the atmosphere of permissiveness in which most people aged 30 and younger were raised, they often do not have the stops that many older people have when it comes to their ability to ask direct questions. They have less of a problem calling “a spade a spade” if they sense it. Although your lack of authenticity may not be revealed to your face, it may be infectiously spread on one of the social media platforms. Regardless, rest assured it will be in a place where those affected will be able to find it. What is the takeaway here? The more transparent and the more authentic you are, the easier and more relaxing leading others becomes.

Some soft skills you can use to become more authentically attractive are:

- Relaxing more on each exhale and enjoying every breath. The more thoroughly you breathe out and let nature take care of the rest, the deeper the feeling of relaxation you will create and exude.
- Softening the area around your eyes and rid yourself of any “judgmental scowl”. This area around the eyes is where we first look to see if the person we encounter is threatening or friendly. The more you relax this area, the more your contact can let his/her guard down and begin to focus on your message.

#### 4.1.2 LISTENING WITH ALL YOUR SENSES

If there is an ability that separates a powerful and respected leader from everyone else it is his ability to listen in a way that makes you feel special. There is a distinct difference that we can all sense between listening attentively and just waiting to talk. Yet how often do we forget this basic rule? The more you can train yourself to listen in a way that your speaker feels seen, heard and understood, the more effective your ability to engage others will become.

A few of many tips for listening with all your senses:

- Use all your senses. How often do we, especially us men, listen literally to each word without even checking to see what kind of emotion is accompanying them? The more you can see, feel, sense, smell, touch and intuit what is being said, the quicker your speaker will lose the urge to repeat themselves, again. Could this save you both time, money and frustration?
- Relax. This is an ongoing theme because of its simple importance. Just as you can catch more money in an open palm than in a clenched fist, so can you hear more when your body is open, calm and receptive instead of tense and stiff. When your speaker notices and feels your calm receptiveness, it will encourage them to say more with fewer words. Conversational efficiency will once again rise.
- Open up your body language. If you are standing, open up your stance, spread out your toes out and uncross your arms. If you are sitting, sit up-right in your chair in a relaxed way. In both cases, aiming more of the left side of your body towards the speaker will make them feel more at ease with you. This should also encourage them to say more with fewer words.

#### Nothing personal

One of the reasons for a leader feeling that it is lonely at the top is that regardless of how well-meaning your decisions are, they will hardly ever please everyone involved, all the time. What other soft skills are needed to help you go beyond just deciding on issues while keeping your integrity intact?

Recognize that those affected by your decisions both have and probably will exercise the right to think, as well as express their opinions. This gives you more room to do the same. This may sound too simple, but think a bit deeper about the fundamental truth this represents and feel how refreshing this perspective can be.

A fundamental truth any leader realizes sooner or later is that although you may be the catalyst for someone's outburst, that outburst is usually more about the person having it and their own baggage than it is about you. Remember this, especially in the heat of the next outburst. Be the leader and strive to respond accordingly.

#### **4.1.3 BE CURIOUS**

Have you ever noticed how hard it is to get mad at a curious child? They may have done the stupidest, most dangerous thing imaginable, but using their childlike presence, innocence and curiosity thankfully makes it harder for a grounded parent to go from loving discipline to angry punishment.

You can use this same effect as a leader, as long as you remain genuine and sincere. Being curious while standing on a platform of service will allow you to ask bolder, more revealing questions that inquire deeper into complex and emotional issues affecting your followers. A powerful question with an innocent smile can save everyone involved time and future embarrassment, especially if its focus is objective rather than subjective.

A great example is, "What is missing to make...a success?" Being curious and asking thoughtful, reflective questions is one of the most powerful tools available to graciously feed a collaborative dialogue. It is exponentially more effective the more you calmly and receptively listen to the full answer.

#### **4.1.4 RESPONSIBILITY, YOUR ABILITY TO RESPOND**

Train yourself to respond more and react less. Starting now, pay close attention to how often during the day you react to something out of an old behavior pattern. It may be a pattern you have become so comfortable with that you have forgotten it exists. The more you can identify these different patterns and the triggers that set them in motion, the easier it will be to change or improve that behavior.

Responsibility literally means "the ability to respond" and to *respond* literally means to "answer back". See if you can use the softness and receptivity this old French word suggests.

Let's now compare this process of responding to the hard, mechanical, almost automatic nature of the word "*react*". This word comes from Latin and means to "act again". Notice how there is little or no sense of conscious reflection or feeling associated with a reaction. It is just business! And rightly so as our nervous system is designed to react quickly and objectively, keeping us functioning and out of danger. It is more electromagnetic in nature and therefore much quicker at "acting again".

Responding is more suited to cooperating with the endocrine system and thereby allowing us to pause and reflect over the best way to answer back to the situation or person at hand. Yet our bodies still have a hard time responding when a quick decision is needed. Therefore, this is also an important soft skill.

#### **4.1.5 WHAT IF YOU ARE STRESSED?**

Will you still have the capability to respond if you are mad, have a tight deadline or an irate boss standing over you? Even though most decisions we make nowadays are not life threatening, when stressed, our bodies have a hard time not reacting to quick decisions. With the current pace of life and the amount of stimulus and information we are bombarded with, it takes time and courage to pause and reflect before answering back. This quality makes those who do respond stand out from the rest of us. This is the quality of a leader.

In each of the following examples feel what happens when you consciously take an extra moment before you “act” as normal. Take a deep breath and reflect over all of your alternatives. Then consciously answer back and resolve the situation with the most effective choice here and now. It very well may end up being the usual solution, yet responding to that decision consciously should feel different. Explore and note that difference. See if you can also notice a change in the reaction of those present and the feeling in the atmosphere. Do you now feel like a more conscious and responsible leader?

- Instead of answering a question before the person asking has finished it, ask yourself how much respect and listening does this behavior demonstrate to your speaker? Wait...then respond accordingly.
- Before taking a routine decision, make sure everyone has had a chance to express his or her views. It may well be a standard decision that you “always handle like this”. Yet if you have been puzzled as to why your team has become more and more silent during your weekly meetings, you may now have the answer as well as the remedy.
- Instead of landing in a debate with the same people over and over again, try listening and repeating back what you have heard to confirm you have heard what was said correctly. Agree first. Only then can you respond in a way that will be heard.
- Next time a deadline approaches and you choose the usual person to perform the audit again, stop and consider some other candidates. What makes you so sure your favorite person will provide the best result? How can a new, fresh choice create confidence in them and motivate others in your group?

Bonus: Responding more and reacting less also works at home!

#### 4.1.6 HABIT VERSUS BALANCE

For the neurological and physiological reasons explained above, we are creatures of habit. Anything that upsets our habits usually feels strange or uncomfortable. If you are used to standing a certain way, changing that stance will probably seem very weird. Test this. Stand as you normally do in front of a mirror. Notice your relationship to gravity. Notice if your body weight is evenly balanced on both feet or if it is leaning more to one side. Is your head resting evenly on your shoulders or is it bent forward and supported by your straining neck muscles? Now stand up-right, using gravity, and balance your weight evenly on both feet. Center your head on your shoulders and allow gravity's pull to pass easily through your whole body. Where in your body and how do you notice a difference?

Again, pay close attention to how quickly you return to your habitual posture.

Great to be back to business as usual...

Did you find yourself asking, "What's the point"?

Here it is:

- Which posture did you find most attractive and inspiring?
- Which one would you as a follower more aptly to follow?
- What if now you were forced to stand in the same position for an entire day? Which do you think would be most supportive and ultimately more comfortable for the longest period of time?

Standing "normally" may initially feel comfortable, especially since you have been doing it for so long, but is it either balanced or efficient? More importantly, what message do you want to project to those around you? How does this message relate to the identity you wish to promote? Be assured that you will be broadcasting a signal with your stance, to those around you, whether or not you are aware of it. You also can consciously choose which signal it is.

If the idea of standing up-right from now on is something you find yourself reacting strongly against, could one of your habits also be to react strongly towards uncomfortable realizations too close to home?

Yes, we like sameness. In fact our brains are designed to promote this kind of behavior. We start doing something and sooner or later we get used to it and all too often it becomes part of our identity. Can you get a sense of how quickly your box of behavior patterns start to define who you are? Soft skills can help you consciously begin identifying these behavior patterns so you can erase, adjust and improve them as well as the identity that they promote.

Herein lies the opportunity. You have the power and skills to look at yourself in the mirror. You can identify and question your habitual behavior, and begin directly to make conscious adjustments to it. You can even get a coach to help. Think about how effectively you can influence your ability to lead, and prosper, together with others!

## 4.2 COURAGEOUS SELLING

Courage means speaking from the heart. Speaking boldly, meaning determinedly, intelligently and loudly has been in fashion for so long that when someone attempts to speak courageously it can often be interpreted as weak. Yet, does pounding your chest actually make something truer? How often does the result end up being the opposite; especially in sales?

Selling courageously requires you to be present and it includes no bravery. Being brave has more to do with ego and thinking about your situation than actually being present with what is happening in real time. Being present usually provides you with a sense of grounded stability and connection with both earth and the heavens. With this connection you can then easily leverage more presence and authenticity into your message. Being courageous does not require more thought as much as it requires more presence. The more present you become the more, courage you will feel to authentically and attractively promote your message.

Current selling practices often become a form of manipulation. We now talk about “sales funnels” which can easily be interpreted as on-line and verbal templates for the unsuspecting victim to be lured into. In this “customer capture” environment it takes courage to speak from the heart when you are selling. But what if this is now becoming the surest path to sustainable results as well as to a reputation for being an honest and trustworthy salesperson?

Many economical signs point to a change in the business climate going forward. Ask anyone if they think people are becoming much more cautious about spending their money. Even the time it takes them to decide is lengthening drastically. Some people are actually starting to save or pay down debt!

In this changing business environment slick brochures, shock and awe PowerPoint presentations and over-dressed sales people are now at risk of becoming cause for buyer caution. Research is even pointing to a rising lack of trust in the market place for once unassailable institutions and leaders. For the first time in over a generation, everyday people appear to want to feel very comfortable and secure before parting with their hard-earned money.

This climate is perfect for a more consciously collaborative approach to selling. Beating your prospective customer over their head with a million reasons why they would be idiots not to buy is plain rude and is thankfully becoming less effective. It will either give them further cause to delay the decision or just piss them off. Listening closely and serving them in a way that they feel seen, heard and understood is becoming the sensible way to encourage customer loyalty. Whether the days of perpetual sales growth are coming to an end or not, listening and collaborating seems to be the most effective way forward.

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To understand this properly you may need to ponder the following:

- People are recognizing the power of the Internet and the access to both information and competition.
- They are using on-line tools to increasingly vote with their wallets AND TELLING THEIR FRIENDS.
- The buyer is in the driver's seat, can vote with their wallet and is recognizing this more and more every day.
- This is a selling atmosphere that demands more respect, listening and cooperation in order for you to succeed.

The more you consciously listen and serve in a way that makes a difference to those you meet, the more likely they are to spread the word to others about how attentive and understanding you are. This, in a nutshell, is collaborative selling. You and your customer are finally in the same boat! The more you deliberately help your customer to succeed, the more success your behavior will attract. The more they recognize and feel your commitment to them, the easier it will be to do business with you and talk about it!

Listening with all your senses to serve, then addressing each customer concern in a way that feels both personal and professional always trumps waiting for your turn to talk. Yes, persuading and cajoling your prospect may still bring home the order, but how sure are you of them not returning it tomorrow and how well will you sleep this evening?

Going forward you will need to have a congruent message that resonates your desire to serve. This needs to be presented in a way that adds to your customer's quality of life and in a way they can measure and feel. The more you can disappear into the personal service each customer now routinely expects, the more apt they will be to share this experience with their colleagues and friends.

Customer loyalty means that your customer not only will return to you to make future purchases for him/herself, it also implies that they are willing to *risk their reputation* by warmly and spontaneously recommending you to others. Your conscious application of such soft skills as listening with all your senses and serving rather than performing will give you the sharpest edge in this new, softer as well as more unforgiving sales environment.

Here are some sensational selling skills that can consciously increase your loyal customer base:

#### 4.2.1 QUALIFYING FOR COLLABORATION

Justifications, reasons and excuses make it easy to talk for hours with someone who is not qualified as a sales prospect. This is most often a complete waste of time for both you and your unqualified prospect. The one obvious exception is if the prospect has already chosen a seller and is now only “entertaining” other bids. The essence of an effective qualification is the process where you and your potential customer mutually agree that it is indeed worthwhile to continue talking with each other. Here are some tips to strengthen this pivotal process.

- Ask questions. Can you demonstrate your professionalism and interest better with a bunch of impressive statements or a well-placed question that encourages your listener to think and respond? Asking a few good questions regarding the decision-making role, interest and budget of the person you are speaking with will often save hours of time talking to the wrong person. Don’t forget to listen with all your senses.
- Repeat and confirm what is said to make sure you understand their answer and its intention correctly. Listen for the details and make mental, or better yet, physical notes to which you can later refer to and build upon.
- Demonstrate respect to the person you are talking with. The best definition of *respect* may well be the following, “I understand that I have no understanding of who you are”. Meeting someone with this type of respect will allow your curiosity to soar and encourage you to wonder over his/her answers. Do you think this will encourage your listener to be more respectful and open to your message too?

#### 4.2.2 DISTINGUISHING NEEDS, WANTS AND WISHES

In the old days a quick, polite “needs analysis” was all that was necessary to get to the point you could start recommending your well-scripted solution. Some quick, strategic questions would lead your prospect right into your well-tested sales arguments. There you could skillfully capture them with a strong close.

Now, all worthy competitors are asking the same type of questions and often in the same manner. As your prospects are now thoroughly trained to defend themselves against this process, what do you need to do to distinguish yourself in a memorable and actionable way?

Here are some tips:

- Ask more detailed and colorful questions to help your prospect to distinguish their needs, from their wants and wishes.
  - Needs are basically defined as those issues or requirements that HAVE to be included for you and your solution to be considered at all.
  - Wants are pretty much everything else that can be negotiated and have some sort of a negotiable monetary value.
  - Wishes are those small things that can make a big difference at little or no cost to you. They are little surprises like early delivery or maybe a spreadsheet breakdown of some details (you have already made). They don't crush your margin and will usually bring a smile or a big sigh of relief to your customer.
- Serve your prospects by helping to prioritize all identified needs, wants and wishes according to **their** interpretation of each issue's value in the deal. The more you can do this in a way that simplifies a complex purchase, the more you are likely to stand out as being service-minded and helpful.
- Confirm each issue separately so that you and your prospect are in complete agreement as to the description of the issue as well as its relative importance or value in the transaction.

Doing this step thoroughly will make your next step, the recommendation, easier and more effective. It will also give you a much firmer base to negotiate and handle objections in a way that increases their perceived value.

#### **4.2.3 "AGREEMENTS THAT STICK"**

Agreement comes from old French and literally means, “to please”. The more pleasure you can evoke when closing the deal, the more chances you will create to get referrals. When complete, an “agreement that sticks” should look and feel as if there is nothing at all left to be said or done regarding the issue. Whether agreeing on one small point in the value-building process or the final close of the sale, a feeling of calmness with a touch of anticipation for the next step is what you should strive for. An “agreement that sticks” is one that is both durable and inspiring. Below are some symptoms of an agreement that sticks.

- It is usually consummated while exhaling. Test it yourself. Say the words “I agree” while exhaling and again when inhaling. Which feels more complete and brings you the most pleasure? This works both over the counter and over the telephone.

- An agreement is not compromise or coercion. The defining word again is pleasure. If you feel that you can still take or leave the deal, or if you feel forced into it, then find that something that is still missing to make it stick.
- There are just too many hungry competitors out there these days to leave any customer with a bitter taste in their mouth. Stay in service. Ask curious questions until you root out the source of their displeasure.
- It will usually encourage movement to the next step. When done correctly, an agreement will feel whole and complete at first. This feeling of pleasure should naturally drift into a sticky and anxious “what next” feeling. This is where everyone wants to get on with what has just been agreed to accomplish. Ultimately, this kind of thoroughness may only happen in a perfect world. But if you can make a game of it and see how close to this *agreement nirvana* you can come, your recommendations and referrals from loyal customers should skyrocket.

### 4.3 INSPIRING AND ENGAGING PRESENTATIONS

The human body is the most versatile and effective communication tool we have. If you are unwilling to use this gift in a way that others can feel and appreciate, please do everyone a favor...send an e-mail instead!

For those of you who have finally gotten your nervousness under control when speaking to a group, the next step is to inspire and engage them into action. Just as with selling, the more you stand on – and work from – a platform of service, the more you can count on getting the results you seek. Trying to perform for that little voice in your head will distract you from the presence of your listeners into the dark and counterproductive recesses of your ego. The more you stay present with your listeners, the more you will silence your little voice. You can then engage those who have come to hear you much more thoroughly and memorably.

The easiest way to become present, here and now, is to dare to feel.

Just daring to feel those butterflies in your stomach, that persistent headache, that old shoulder injury, that pain in the neck or the hunger in your belly will bring you back to the present.

How do we know this?

Try feeling something that happened yesterday or that may happen tomorrow. When do you experience feeling this memory or preview of the future?

Of course, the only time we can feel anything is right here, right now.

How can you enhance your ability to feel?

Take a nice deep, conscious and inspiring breath. The more you breathe, the more you will open yourself up to feel what is happening within as well as what is happening around you. In many ways a presentation is like a dance. Even if you do not like to dance ask yourself if dancing is more enjoyable when you relax, breathe and enjoy it or when you hold your breath and stiffen up like a statue?

Try taking in one joyous breath after another and experience its effect on your ability to feel. You will probably notice that you can see, hear and feel more of what is happening around you. You may also sense a greater ability to empathize and intuit more of what is happening within you and within your listeners.

But what if you don't?

It is very easy to sabotage this whole process of discovery by looking where you normally do and, as usual, notice nothing new. At this point it is often both logical and economical to give up looking. Yet, what will you benefit from by quitting? Especially if you understand and believe that others, whom you perceive to be more present than you, seem to be experiencing more and different input? Sometimes it can be a depressing thought that you cannot feel anything new, but could that be progress too?

This is a perfect example of step 1a of an AHA experience, The powerful "Oh Heck", experience. This is where you discover something that is missing which you previously had no idea about. This is the key to begin looking afresh at what you have completely overlooked before. Since it is brand new to you, but apparently not to others, is it any wonder that you feel so dumb and useless for not seeing it perfectly every time? This is how we are wired! Relax and keep discovering!

Many of the factors that contribute to what we call modern life may have, consciously or not, helped to shut down your sensory perception systems. From simply ignoring your body's signals to deliberately taking painkillers, you may have become "comfortably numb", as Pink Floyd once put it. More importantly you may not even be aware of it. To become more emotionally and sensually aware, to increase your ability to engage the emotions of your listeners, you are required to open up these closed and dusty systems. The simplest and most effective way to do this is to breathe and feel even more. With a bit of time, perseverance and a lot more oxygen, you will begin to open up these barricaded senses. What can you experience then?

Although this may seem a simple exercise, be advised that opening up these blocked senses requires you to take direct responsibility for your own health and wellbeing. If breathing to sense more feels like a challenging or scary proposition, it is up to you and you alone to choose to try it and determine the intensity. If you are not ready for this or fear what kind of emotions some inspiring breaths may uncover, then you might want to seek professional help. Keep in mind that even if you do feel compelled to seek help that too is progress. Remember the best "Aha" experience often starts as an "Oh Heck". Before you weren't conscious of these old skeletons in your closet, now you are and (with or without help) you can consciously do something constructive about them.

Once you begin to explore this new dimension of inspirational presence you will be able to engage your listeners more effectively and personally. You can also move forward in the room, get physically closer to them and invite them to participate with direct questions requiring specific answers as well as personal reflections.

Again, an interactive presentation is like a good dance. The more confident you are of the steps, the more you can let go and lose yourself into the dance. With practice you will become the dance and this will make the experience that much more enjoyable for you and your dance partner. The same is true for your presentation. The more you lose yourself in the service of your listeners, the more they will be served with their own thoughts regarding what you are saying. The more it will be about them and their decision, and the less it will be about you and your ego. Practice following their dance steps, inviting, questioning, guiding and serving. Marvel at how you move them to respond courageously to your message and enjoy the feeling of any remaining stage fright you may have disappearing.

### 4.3.1 ATTRACTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

Getting people to listen to you immediately is probably the most challenging threshold of your entire presentation. Remember this is happening at the same time you are usually wrestling with your own thoughts, fears and nervousness about standing up to speak at all!

Therefore, the more you can let go of your ego and focus on your listeners, the better chance you will have of serving them in a way they will enjoy and can act upon. Here are some tips for an attractive and memorable introduction:

- Take a deep breath. If you want to inspire and engage your listeners from before the first word, breathe in more Spirit! Start talking on the top of your breath and then use all those punctuation points such as periods, commas, question marks and the like to pause...and take another deep breath. Your pauses will also allow what you just said to hang in the air a bit longer, providing your listeners with a greater chance to receive it, digest it and transform it into their own thought.
- Stretch out your arms in a warm and opening welcome. Relax your hands and aim your palms up a bit and you will increase your chances of creating a more receptive atmosphere of listening. Everyone likes to be “wished well” and adding this body language to your hearty “Welcome “will go a long way to disarming your listener’s skepticism and resistance.
- Activate your body and lean into life. Using gravity, soften your knees and place most of your weight on the pads on the front of your feet. Just as a professional sportsperson leans into the action, this little tilt will better prepare you to receive whatever threat or opportunity next presents itself.

### 4.3.2 CONSCIOUS STAGE PLACEMENT

Standing in the center of the stage, turn away from your listeners and take a few steps back towards the back wall or screen; then turn to face them again. Here you should feel fairly detached from your audience. It should feel a bit more proper and official at the back of your stage. Here is the most effective place to present facts, figures and statistics. Rhetorical questions requiring no direct answer are best floated from here as well. A good rule is the drier, more factual or rhetorical your message is, the further away from your audience you should stand increasing everyone’s sense of detachment and objectivity.

Return to the middle of the stage and then take a few steps forward, towards your listeners. Get a sense of how much more engaged you feel with them with every forward step. Rest assured that this feeling is mutual and the closer you get, the more your listeners will feel encouraged to engage in what you are saying. Be careful of getting too close and thereby obligating them to participate.

The more you test the dimensions of the stage and room, especially moving forward and back, the more you can develop a sense of where the best listening and receptivity is for just that point you want to make. The more personal and subjective your message is, the closer to your listeners you want be and vice versa.

#### **4.3.3 HANDLING CHALLENGING LISTENERS CONSCIOUSLY**

Whenever you present, count on having someone challenge you in a way you are least expecting. The universe seems to have a sense of humor and will often put a challenger in your way just to test your will to handle them and develop further. Some of the most common challenger types are:

- *Mr. Know it all*, he (most often) wants to test just how competent you are
- *The Wind Tunnel* who loves hearing him/herself talk
- *The Wet Rag* who woke up on the wrong side of bed and is now determined to take it out on you
- *The Master Debater* who sees every statement as something to challenge

When you encounter individuals exhibiting any of the above behavior patterns, they should be danced with according to that person's preferred dance steps. Having said this there are some patterns here that usually crop up over and over again and certain soft skills have been found to work best in certain situations. Use the following skills consciously and with respect. Your goal is to find that wonderful human being hiding behind these patterns and invite them to join your dialogue. Effectively handling each one of them verifies one more success and clearing the next step on your own path to presentation mastery.

There are many tips and a solid progression of remedies to use depending upon the intensity and severity of your challenger. Below are a few of the most effective:

- Ask for clarity. Standing on your platform of service and with as much curiosity as you can muster, ask your challenger to clarify their point even more. It is incredible how many debates can be avoided or shortened just by clearing up misunderstandings. Make sure you fully understand what is being said before offering your response. If this does not work you may want to try...
- Pacing. If their clarification is still a bit murky or suspect, another more powerful step could be to “pace” your challenger. This involves the service of repeating back to them, with as much curiosity as possible, exactly what they said. Just put a question mark on the end of your word-for-word repetition and then remain silent until they have replied. It may also be helpful to start pacing by saying, “If I understand it/you correctly...” If their reply is offered in a challenging tone then you may want to escalate into...
- Sourcing their intention. A real challenging listener can be there to take the spotlight from you or at least to lower your radiance from it. A powerful tool, when used correctly (and this means with as much curiosity and service as you can still muster) is to expose “the elephant in the room”. Many challengers (especially the ones furthest in the back, most distant from you and the stage) do not want to be in the spotlight. This is evidenced by their strategy to sit behind the audience and thereby use them as a shield. Imagine their surprise when you open up your arms and curiously ask them to answer the following question, “Excuse me, what exactly is your point”?

Can you guess where every head in the audience will now turn?

On whom do you think every eye in the room will now be focused?

Again, service, curiosity, a few deep joyous breaths and some humor will serve everyone well in this often, awkward moment. So will your courage to pause for as long as it takes to allow them to complete their reply.

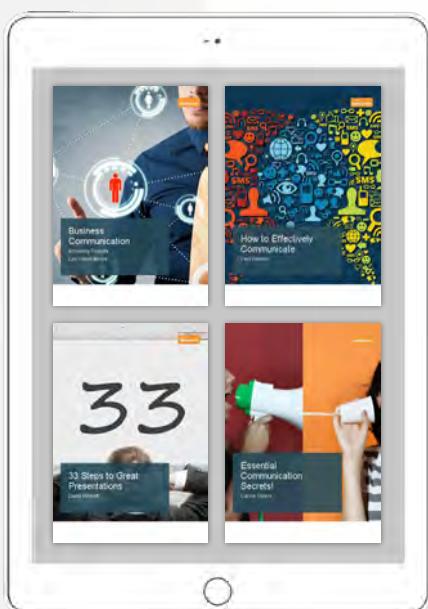
Done correctly, these soft skills and others will eliminate most chances of landing in an uninvited and time-wasting debate. They will also offer the service of allowing the challenger to hear and reflect upon what they just said and how it was delivered.

This practice is best accomplished with the transparency of pure service. Transparency offers no conversational handle for them to start a debate. It also serves your other listeners by giving them a chance to get a deeper understanding of both the content and the intention of the challenger's message. If their response is legitimate, then deal with it as best you can. If your questions reveal a further ploy for attention (and many challengers are usually not used to this much attention) then this tool will usually take the wind out of their sails and allow you to continue.

Yes, sometimes it can indeed be a service to all your other listeners when you "give your challenger enough rope to let him hang himself".

- Please Leave. The absolute last tool you should take from your toolbox is to ask your challenger to leave. Why?

If you are really there to serve all and impart your message in the most effective manner, how effective can you be and what kind of service can you provide if your challenger is no longer in the room?



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It is up to you to weigh this against the service to all the other more receptive listeners in the room. Sometimes it is much more effective to ask the challenger to leave rather than risk losing the ear of everyone else. If it comes to this use these tools to create a win/win atmosphere where the challenger agrees that leaving is an effective solution for everyone.

Remember, you own the stage so it's always your call.

#### **4.3.4 LEAVING YOUR LISTENERS WITH A HANDLE**

How many times have you heard or said that this presentation is “just for your information”? What is the information for? If there is absolutely nothing to do with the information being presented, then why in the world are you wasting your time listening?

There is always a next step for your listeners to take!

The clearer and more measurable you make it, the easier it will be for your listeners to take it and for you to measure it. Therefore, at the end of every presentation make sure to leave your listeners with a clear handle regarding the message you have just imparted. Make it so obvious they can easily grasp and implement it.

Some tips to create that measurable handle or call to action:

- Taking a stand: Ask for a show of hands or, better yet, for audience members to stand up as a confirming signal that they support your message. This will demonstrate to you and the other listeners that they will do what you have asked. Example: “All those in favor of helping to evaluate the new process, please stand up”.
- Taking orders. If you are selling something or enrolling participants have your order book or sign-up sheet ready and visible. Remember to ask clearly for the sale and then give clear, specific instructions on how to buy. Example: “For those of you who want to take one home please come forward when I’m finished. I have a few available for purchase today...and I take credit cards”.
- Questionnaire or feedback form: This can be more of a burden than an inspiration as it is now trendy to ask for formal feedback on nearly everything. Yet, the longer and more engaging your presentation, the more you have probably earned the right to ask your participants to fill in an evaluation of some sort.
- Book appointments, collect business cards or take contact information. Do your best to establish a way of contacting those interested listeners. Have a sign-up sheet that you can pass around or leave it along with a pen and some of your business cards by the door. Standing by the door and asking to trade business cards is another way to accomplish this.

These suggestions allow you to quantify how many accepted your message. As soon as you get an accurate figure such as, “There were 20 people present and 14 signed up for...” then you have a benchmark. Now you can begin making adjustments to increase your effective results on every subsequent presentation. Make it a game to improve and have fun doing it.

By the way, next time your boss asks, “How did the presentation go?” think of all the points you will make by saying something like, “There were 20 participants and 12 signed up for the beta test” instead of, “It felt good”.

#### 4.4 SERVICE YOU CAN FEEL

In any customer service or call center position you are going to have to deal with dissatisfied or even irate customers. This is someone who feels they have been wronged by your product or company. The quicker they feel that you hear and understand their situation *from their perspective*, the faster you will be able to begin resolving the issue.

To attempt to resolve it or defend what happened before they feel heard can – and often does – make the situation worse. From your experience you may have the perfect solution, but until they are ready to receive your input, you are wasting their time and their dwindling patience. Give them the space to let off steam and listen to them. This is an integral part of a truly transparent service process. Remember it’s not about you, your product or your company. Practice to consciously use your listening skills in a way that they can truly sense your empathy and understanding.

If you are lucky enough to be face-to-face with this person, you will be able to physically demonstrate your willingness to listen. For instance, the left side of your body is hard wired into the right side of your brain. This is the softer, more receptive hemisphere. Relaxing and exposing more of the left side of your body will signal more openness and receptiveness in your listening. Focusing your left eye into their right one will also contribute to your ability to empathize. Throwing in a few appropriate questions with lots of space to let them fully speak their mind will also help. The more effectively they can ventilate their frustration into your willing listening, the faster they will exhaust their anger, frustration and will soon run out of nasty things to say.

Remember here again it’s nothing personal. When they start running out of steam help them rinse out the rest with one or two “Anything else?” questions. These inquiries combined with your empathetic listening will effectively empty out all remaining frustration. There are also specific skills you can learn that aid you in releasing all this ventilated stuff and help you to avoid becoming a human trashcan.

Evidence that you have helped them to vent completely is when you feel ample space to start speaking. You will be able to more easily collaborate with them to find an appropriate solution. The more you disappear into service and make this process about them instead of you, the more room they will create to hear your suggestions. Keep breathing, stay present, ask questions and listen closely to both what is said and what lies hidden between the lines. With enough practice you can literally question and guide them right into the most effective solution, and they will think it is their idea! On some level this could be interpreted as manipulation. Yet if you stand for service, remain curious and respectful, championing the intention to solve the situation in the best possible way for all, how could this be seen as manipulation?

Tip: Avoid becoming “A legend in your own mind”. Ego disappears when you make it about the person being served rather than about you. Remember it is not about you or the points you think you are making by solving their situation effectively.

For those of you in a call center, this type of thorough listening may exceed the time guidelines you have for each specific call. Yet, the more you stand anchored in service, the higher the probability you will have to transform a truly hostile customer back into a loyal one. What is worth more to your company and your employment future: keeping to your time limit or transforming an angry customer into a loyal one? If your company disagrees with your decision to serve, it may be time to find a place to work more suited to your abilities and personal stand of service.

#### **4.4.1 ATTENTIVE LISTENING**

We have already discussed how important active and attentive listening is, but it only works when you apply it. The more you can open up, be curious and listen, the more information you will both hear and sense, and the less you will have to say. When listening to a presentation, ask yourself who is more interesting: a babble-mouth who holds you hostage for fear you will lose interest if they ever pause, or, someone who is attentively listening to you? If unsure please test both answers on others.

#### **4.4.2 LEAVING LOYALTY IN YOUR WAKE**

The more you follow the tips and suggestions provided here, the easier you will find it to create loyal customers who warmly and spontaneously recommend you, your products and organization to others. Listening and service are the cornerstones to any valid collaborative dialogue. The more you practice them, the more attractive you will become. Want to save big on your marketing budget? Listening and serving are the keys to creating loyal customers who will gladly spread your message and build your business for you.

## 4.5 TEAMWORK: DIVERSITY THROUGH DIALOGUE

We are all different and the more we train to respectfully collaborate with each other, the more infectious the creativity and synergy will become as a result.

The best definition of the word *respect* is probably offered by the Aikido Master Yoshigosaki. He defines respect to mean, “I understand that I have no understanding of who you are”. Think of the openness, the wonder and the curiosity this definition invites into a relationship. With no framework or prejudice to rely upon, yours is a clean slate to create a brand new and fresh picture of this magnificent individual before you. This type of respect will also allow you to enrich each and every conversation.

Another soft skill that will help build your team is being able to distinguish between the three primary types of conversation: discussion, debate and dialogue. Have you ever stopped to consider the vast and powerful differences between these three forms of communication?

A number of years ago the Board of Directors for a prominent Swedish Professional Hockey team often spent upwards of six hours at every monthly board meeting going through their workload. They were all passionate about their team and each had strong opinions about which decisions would produce the best results. The inconvenient consequence of this passion was many hours of debate and argument, with little decisive result to show. Most would leave these meetings exhausted and frustrated.

One evening a dear colleague of mine, who was also a board member, took a few minutes and went through a process to distinguish these three forms of conversation. Starting with the etymology of each word, he went through a simple guided discussion to allow his colleagues to distinguish the properties, consequences and usual body language associated with each word. Below is a description of part of the process this board went through.

*First off, they looked at each word's origins:*

According to the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*:

- **Discussion:** comes from Latin and means “to break apart”
- **Debate:** comes from old French meaning “the battle”
- **Dialogue:** comes from the ancient Greek *dialogos* or (διάλογος). and means “two logics”.

#### 4.5.1 DISCUSSION

“Let’s discuss it” is one of the most ubiquitous phrases used when a group gets together to talk. It is a powerful way to objectively highlight all the bits and pieces of an issue, rate their importance so as to make it easier to come to a comprehensive decision. In a pure discussion, points are brought up in a neutral fashion. Facts are emphasized and opinions are withheld. The goal of a discussion is to “leave no stone unturned” so that all the important points relating to the issue at hand are noted and prioritized in the subsequent decision process. Yet, you may have already experienced that this is not as easy as it sounds.

#### 4.5.2 DEBATE

Opinions do crop up and must be expressed by those who hold them if there is to be any lasting agreement or resolution. How these opinions are handled brings us to the next stage of this conversational process.

If these points of contention are brought up in a tense atmosphere where participants would rather wait to talk than listen receptively and...

- If statement and hard facts are used as weapons to win the point
- If the only questions expressed come out as accusations
- If the temperature in the room, as well as in each participant, continues to rise
- If the collective body language in the room goes unconscious as it continues to look more tense and defensive
- If the predominant goal of those present is look good or defend a reputation
- If the result is that when the allotted time runs out:
  - There is still a wide gap in the points of view of the participants
  - Someone has overpowered all other voices and dominated everyone into submission to his (more often than not) point of view
  - Everyone gave up and resigned himself to a compromise, leaving few or none inspired enough to follow through and implement it.

Then congratulations, you and your colleagues have created a textbook debate situation. The usual result is exactly what the Hockey Board experienced: lots of wasted decision time, increased frustration and the need for more “discussion”.

#### 4.5.3 DIALOGUE

However if,

- The atmosphere in the room is focused on service
- Participant's body language is relaxed and receptive
- There are more questions and inquiries than statements
- Curiosity and cooperation are the predominant qualities in the atmosphere
- Participants are encouraged to express their opinions so that all points can be understood and considered
- The predominant goal is to reach an agreement that all can stand for by the end of the allotted time
- The result is an agreement that leaves all participants pleased, with nothing to add, and inspired to get to work on the action plan

Then congratulations you and your colleagues have managed to create a powerful atmosphere of dialogue. The best evidence of your accomplishment will be an agreement that sticks, and which pleases everyone in the room.

Now, let's look a bit more closely at the word dialogue (διάλογος). As with Nordic Runes each letter in the Greek alphabet is a symbol. Combining these symbols into a sentence provides us approximately the following: *"An exchange of ideals beginning with an open inquiry with respect and impartiality"*.

Keep in mind that this whole conversational process is in fact a vibrant dance, which can snake back and forth between all three types of conversations multiple times. The point is that the more you can control the process, the more effective your conversation time will be and the more durable, inspiring and "sticky" the resulting agreement will be.

But why stop there? The next step beyond agreement is consciously reaching accord. Accord literally means "agreement from the heart" and is much more powerful and durable than an agreement reached on purely intellectual terms. Reaching accord is going to incorporate an emotional dimension from all participants that cannot be easily forgotten or denied.

Japan's ancient Samurai Warriors coined the term "WA" in their Bushido Code. This term/tool is still used in the highest levels of management in Japan today. It describes the most receptive point in a dialogue. This occurs when there is a feeling of total calm and sense of unconditional listening in the room. Everyone is "all ears" and the collective focus is on receiving rather than transmitting. This is where your solution can be most effectively proposed and an agreement most easily reached.

#### 4.5.4 TRANSFORMING HOT DEBATES INTO JUICY DIALOGUES

All too often we wind up in a heated discussion, debate or argument and wonder how we got there...again. Especially when the topic is an important one with clear and distinct issues. The path to debate lies in the fact that we react and our nervous system takes over. Words start to fly before the consequences of expressing them are fully thought through.

What's the remedy?

So how can you avoid the consequences of letting conversations drift unconsciously towards a time-consuming debate? What is the simplest, most effective remedy for this situation?

This soft skill could also be put under the heading, “too simple for complicated minds”. Here is the most effective solution in two simple parts:

1. First, ask an appropriate and reflective question.

Some simple suggestions/combinations could be:

1. “Seems like we have landed in a debate again. What do you think?”

2. “Can we agree that we disagree?”

3. “Where do we now agree/disagree?”

2. Listen curiously, with all your senses, to the full answer(s) given by your colleague(s).

This really means actively listening until they have finished speaking AND THEY FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN HEARD and understood. The best way to know you have reached this plateau is when they have no more left to say.

Then carefully guide this newborn dialogue into adulthood by continuing to ask reflective questions and respectfully listening to all the answers.

So, what happened to our Hockey Board-members?

When this process of distinguishing these conversational terms was finished and each word was “mapped out” on the conversational grid, a simple game was proposed.

#### 4.5.5 THE DEBATE GAME

Whenever someone on the board felt that the conversation had drifted into a debate, they would signal this. Everyone would then throw the equivalent of one dollar into a special “debate pot” in the middle of the table. Then my friend would calmly ask the group to identify which parts of the current issue each member was in agreement on and where agreement was still missing. They would check off the parts that were agreed and then methodically focus on those points remaining until agreement was reached there too. When this process was complete an action plan was created and initiated.

The result was that within two months they were able to complete their meeting agenda within two hours and create specific action plans for many issues. All of this by consciously distinguishing which type of conversation they were having. By the end of the first month they had collected a big enough “debate pot” to have a fairly elaborate party to celebrate all the debates they identified and resolved. After that first debate party their monthly “debate pots” grew drastically smaller. Simultaneously, everyone’s awareness of the qualities and properties of each conversational skill grew, saving time, energy and frustration. Members left satisfied and most began to look forward to the next meeting.

If you and your colleagues spend too much time debating things without much resolution and agreement you are warmly invited to play the Debate Game too.

#### 4.5.6 TO COACH OR BE COACHED

Ask most successful coaches what their most useful skill is and most will probably answer, the ability to be coached themselves. The coaching profession is based upon powerful and flowing dialogue that is extremely hard to create unless everyone is willing to listen and try new suggestions.

The more each one of your colleagues can practice the skills needed to sense when it is more appropriate to be coached than to coach, the better your team will become at increasing its capacity to learn and succeed. The key? Listening to others *like your professional life depended upon it.*

#### 4.5.7 DECIDE MORE EFFECTIVELY

“Decide” comes from the same Latin family of words as homicide, genocide, suicide, etc. It means to end or kill the alternatives.

Using a biological metaphor, our body's cells have two main alternatives when it comes time to expire:

- Naturally, meaning in a calm situation they eventually just run out of steam and are gracefully absorbed into the bloodstream without a trace.
- Catastrophically meaning when subjected to too much stress they explode. This releases poisons into the bloodstream that seem to speed up the aging process.

You are now invited to draw a comparison to the conversational process leading up to a decision.

What can we win by practicing the calm process of dialogue? How can we practice guiding our colleagues through a reflective thought process? This is a process where they themselves are invited to choose to kill the alternatives (or perhaps just let them be absorbed into the conversation). This softer way of deciding will initially take more time and employ new skills, which will need to be trained. Ask yourself which of the following choices you would enjoy the most and which form of leadership would you respect and honor most:

- Having someone else kill your alternatives for you through a heated debate and by leaving you with an ultimatum?
- Being encouraged through an open and nurturing dialogue to kill them yourself while being humbly offered bits of information to guide you?

Most of us, given this choice, will open up more for receiving pertinent information and the ability to choose. This can greatly help us come to our own decisions more comprehensively and minimize the cognitive dissonance we often feel when rushed into an uncomfortable decision. The result: fewer mistakes and restarts, saving time, energy, money, and reducing frustration.

Achieving this requires practicing and learning new soft skills, yet the results are normally less stressful and more solidly aligned with each member of the team. It will also minimize the risk of your agreement blowing up and spewing toxins into conversation flows and prematurely aging future relationships.

This is just a tiny smorgasbord of some practical applications for a more conscious use of your body language combined with some sensational soft skills. There are plenty more. Even limiting yourself to the ones presented here should provide you and your organization more ease, efficiency and profitability. If you choose the path of mastering conscious body language and practicing these soft skills, your benefits will continue to pile up.

## 5 CONSCIOUS MASTERY

Observe closely many experts who are paraded out to convince us of something. Take economics, for instance. How many economists are present to the people they are addressing instead of being focused on their prepared statements and to the thoughts in their heads? Notice how often they intentionally use fancy “abstract” words that confuse rather than clear up the point they are trying to make. Watch how many people shut down rather than ask these experts for a simple explanation. Most of us are either too confused or too worried about looking like a fool to ask for an understandable explanation. Instead we politely pretend to know exactly what they mean and remain silent. Consciously creating confusion is a great way to retain power yet missing a good night’s sleep can be an obvious consequence.

Watch them as many try to convince us the solution to the current debt crisis is to take on more debt. Look at their eyes and see if they are here with their current listeners or if they are in some dark corner of their own brilliant mind. Then look at their results so far... what is the track record of their predictions and, most importantly, how have their predictions and decisions helped make you and your family’s life better?



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Take this down to your personal level and think about all the experts you have met when buying things in stores and who recommend products on TV.

- How often do you get the feeling that they are there specifically to make your life better?
- How often do you feel as if they are there to promote their own career or make money from convincing you to buy/do what they are recommending?

Could the primary distinction between the Expert and the Master reveal itself through who each one is actually there to serve?

## 5.1 EXPERTISE AND MASTERY

Consciousness could well be the deciding factor in distinguishing an expert from a master. It is one thing to be conscious of a brilliant thought and how great you must be to have invented it or discovered it. Being a “legend in your own mind” is very self-serving. It is something entirely different to instead consciously serve your listeners with this brilliance in a way that can measurably improve their lives.

Both the expert and master may have the same brilliant skills and even the same experiences, but what are these skills used for? If one is to contribute to others and the other is to further their own successful career, which one are you more attracted to?

The definitions that follow do not currently exist. They are offered as an invitation to more thoroughly define how you can personally choose to consciously apply your hard-won knowledge. For instance, take two very well-versed people. Each capable of, for instance, leading others. In fact, picture a set of twins who have grown up together, attended the same schools, and followed the same career paths. There is one decisive difference that still distinguishes these siblings. One considers himself an expert and loves to promote and defend why he is correct. The other chooses the path of mastery and seeks to learn further by serving others with his expertise, listening skills and further improving everyone’s understanding. To be sure many teachers, coaches and leaders who are considered experts excel when it comes to engaging listeners and inspiring them to think for themselves. They should probably be renamed masters. What about you?

### 5.1.1 EXPERT (A MORE DISTINCT DEFINITION)

Experts are outstanding in their field. They have often studied their area of expertise for most of their adult lives (at least ten thousand hours on average, according to, you guessed it, other experts). They have built a reputation for having all the answers, or at least appearing to have them. They know a lot and take great pride in demonstrating their knowledge at every opportunity. Yet they have (either consciously or unconsciously) chosen to use their expertise to enrich themselves first, not the lives and careers of those listening. They exploit this knowledge as a means of bringing more attention, fame, and fortune to themselves. Not only that, if challenged, experts will often do what is necessary to prove and defend their point, even by humiliating or degrading the inquirer or challenger in the process. Experts usually love to debate using their knowledge as a weapon to defend their reputation or the institution they represent. Even the expert's body language, stiff and defensive, looks very much like an exclamation point (!). Finally, expertise seems more of a goal that once reached is transformed into a fortress of knowledge, which must be defended at all costs.

### 5.1.2 MASTER (A MORE HUMBLE DEFINITION)

Masters are experts in their field too. They have also studied their discipline for most of their lives and have become the vortex of an increasing knowledge pool. Yet, the big difference is that masters usually thrill at sharing their knowledge with others. Masters love and seek chances to serve their listeners' thirst for knowledge. In the process they increase everyone's understanding of the subject. Through open and thought-provoking dialogue, everyone's point of view is welcome and discussed. This often results in developing new ideas to further enlarge the current knowledge base. The thirst for further understanding is much bigger than the need for personal recognition. A reflective question is one of a master's most valuable tools, and a listener's "eureka moment" is their profit. They fully understand that by sharing their knowledge and being open to learn more, they will continuously increase everyone's understanding as well as their own ability to deliver it. Everyone wins with a master.

When challenged, a true master will respectfully ask the challenger to explain his or her point to see if there is something new for all to discover. Debate is seen as entertainment (at best) or a waste of time (at worst) and so they strive to avoid it. The true master will continually seek to create an open, curious and collaborative dialogue in which even more possibilities can be discovered, discussed and integrated.

A master's body language is usually soft, attractive, and often resembles a supple yet grounded question mark (?). Through selfless service, everyone benefits from the master. Mastery in this sense becomes more of a path than a goal, as there is never a final destination to expanding a master's understanding.

### 5.1.3 MASTERY, THE CHALLENGE

Currently, a quick and reactive answer from an expert is usually enough to shut down most inquiry. Likewise an “I don’t know” will sabotage any remaining curiosity from all but the most determined students of life. What is stated in the mass media is taken as the whole truth and much more often than warranted. In short, what if it has become fashionably comfortable to be unconsciously lazy regarding what we receive and believe?

As long as things are going well there is less pressure to look for change and more tendency to let the good times roll. Free information served up on a silver platter is enough to avoid questioning what or who lies behind it. This collective gullibility seems to be human nature and usually continues until it gets too unbelievable for even the unconscious. Then it abruptly stops. For those of us driven to understand the mechanics of life, good times can be very frustrating as well as very informative. Trying to start a conversation that questions why things work the way they do these days often falls on deaf ears. “Why fix it if it ain’t broke?”

In times like these a real master shines. It is much easier to be a leader when everyone around you is frustrated and wanting, but consciously grasping the opportunity to master your leadership and conversation skills when everyone else is busy enjoying themselves takes courage. For those of you still reading this, here is your chance to get conscious and practice using every cell to master generating interest and engagement with whatever your message is. The better you get at consciously learning, developing and practicing your soft skills when no one cares, the more leverage and experience you will have to make a difference when the collective focus shifts back to honoring these noble skills. Then, the sky’s the limit.

# 6 A CONSCIOUS AND SENSATIONAL FUTURE

Development occurs in waves. Over the last 200 years technology, cheap energy and finance have kept our focus on neater and more complex stuff. We now have access to more gadgets than we can effectively use. Many of us have more choices that we can effectively make. All this development has contributed to keeping us distracted from further developing the most important communication tool we have, our bodies. Just like the seasons, this too will inevitably change.

Have you noticed yet that excitement is one of the best ways to distract you from what is really important? It can hinder you from being the best you can be, especially when you are not in charge. Remember, deer can get so excited by seeing a pair of headlights that they freeze in the most inappropriate and dangerous places. Have you ever noticed how much someone looking at TV looks like a deer in your headlights? Have you also noticed how easy it is to play a trick on someone mesmerized by the TV or computer screen? Yet it isn't only in front of technology. Walk down a busy street and count how many people consciously and actively acknowledge your presence. More often than not you will get the feeling that you are at best an obstacle to be avoided instead of a fellow human being. Real change will come when we consciously start to see and acknowledge each other, even strangers. Start a trend. Connect by smiling and say Hi to someone you don't know.

Most of us currently act as we have forgotten or avoid listening intuitively to what our inner voice has to say. What if this is the essence of becoming unconscious?

- How good are you at handling total silence?
- Do you seek a calm meditative or reflective moment, or are you constantly searching for more exciting input?
- Can you hear your own inner voice and the wisdom it has to offer?
- If so, does that voice carry the same weight as your TV, radio or your Facebook account?
- Do you slavishly follow and quote the latest trends, or do you occasionally stop and plumb your thoughts and feelings to discover if your inner compass agrees?
- What do the words "common sense" and "intuition" mean to you?
- How open and receptive are you to change?

Whether due to a natural or man-made catastrophe, a simple change in taste or something else entirely, times always change and so do we. For instance, you no longer have to look too far to find a store or an Internet site promoting better health and fitness. Yoga has now become as accepted as running. It may also be interesting to note that yoga's origins were to prepare the body for meditation... That is to listen to your inner voice and reach a higher level of...yep, consciousness. 30 years ago you had to practically go underground to find even a small portion of the knowledge you can instantly access by Googling yoga, health and even consciousness.

This, burnout and other evidence suggests that many of us are now waking up to what has happened during our long technological slumber. More and more of us are seeking ways to become more conscious and responsible. Self-awareness may finally become fashionable. The tools are here now. It's just to take them out and start practicing.

## 6.1 BEYOND SURVIVAL

Although we still have the capacity to nuke or poison most of the human race out of existence, most of us are now focusing on making our lives better. We no longer just want to survive. Life used to be much harder and to a large extent acting like machines helped deaden the pain of feeling too much. Acting like a computer may currently be in vogue, but how much fun is it to live forever in a digital world of ones and zeros? What if it is time to get conscious and dare to begin feeling again?

The thought of being more in contact with your feelings can be scary, but for more and more of us it offers a positive alternative. Keep in mind the realization that you cannot choose one set of feelings over another. Feelings come in one giant package. In other words, if you are seeking more happiness you have to be willing to feel sad too. Yet by addressing and working through your feelings as they surface, you can begin eliminating those that bring you down and focus in on those that provide you with joy. Eliminating those that cause you concern will leave you with more room and energy to experience the ones that you choose. Using these same practices at work you can begin to reshape how you do business and consciously start attracting more of the type of people you want to do business with. Again, do not take this as the truth. It is offered as an invitation; try it and see if it works for you too.

## 6.2 CONCLUSION

Technology has increased the speed of our world. It has provided each of us with access to information and people faster than ever before. Quantity is still not always quality though. With all this increased availability and access, it has become much easier to become quickly and unconsciously distracted. It is much easier focus on the shock and awe of all the stuff that surrounds us instead of getting calm and looking within.

This little primer of conscious body language and soft skills is offered as a taste of how much more of life there is to experience AFK (Away From Keyboard). It is also offered as a taste of how rich you can make your professional life too. Richness here refers to many more dimensions than just money.

Our latest medical guesstimates are that we only use about ten percent of our brain's capacity. No one seems to know or at least talk about what percentage of our body's capacity we use, so we will have to make a best guess ourselves. Next time you are walking down a busy street or through a busy shopping center, consciously observe the percentage of people who:

- Seem to look and act healthy, happy and as if they are consciously enjoying their lives
- Appear to have taken the time to consciously look their best (regardless of style).
- Look to be aware of what is going on all around them. This should eliminate most of those using their smart gadgets or wearing headphones. Also eliminate those people who seem to be hiding behind some sort of "street face" stare to appear more unapproachable. Focus on those who seem to have a conscious lightness in their step and an approachable yet responsible smile or sense of openness in their face.
- Appear to be walking in a balanced yet flowing form and with an upright and attractive posture. For instance, look at how many actually use their ankles consciously and effectively and note how lacking conscious use physically shows up in older people.
- Acknowledge you as a human being instead of avoiding you like an obstacle in the way of their current mission.

This is an interesting exercise that will both train you to find the people who really seem to be consciously enjoying their time on this planet, as well as provide you with the chance to think about the skills that allow them behave like this.

It can also be a wakeup call as to how much work there is left to do and how you can cordially invite those people on autopilot back to the presence of a conscious existence. Here is our opportunity. What kind of a world could we share and enjoy if everyone around us was:

- In top health
- Prosperous
- Was demonstrating a deep sense of personal integrity
- Feeling comfortable and secure
- Exhibiting a sense of connection with everyone around?

Becoming conscious of this possibility usually provides a deeper sense of connection and empathy between you and your fellow subjects. You may even find yourself smiling at a few of them. Nurture that feeling and see if you can begin to spread it using some of the skills described in this book. The more you apply these skills the more you will learn about yourself and others. But it all starts with a commitment to take your first step.

Just daring to look a passing stranger in the face, sharing a bit of your humanity with him/her and offering a friendly “hello” could not only make their day, but your own as well.

Enjoy your work and enjoy your life and here's to doing both with a bit more mindful consciousness.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a successful career in international sales and marketing management Kurt Larsson founded Expanding Understanding 20 years ago to train professionals in the effective use of our most powerful communication, tool our bodies. Accruing a wide range of international sales experience – from automobile tires to retail banking systems in over 20 countries – he is also a proficient executive coach and workshop leader as well as an International Body Harmony Teacher of nearly twenty years. His specialty is the Language of our bodies and how we can consciously use it to increase sales, attract people to follow your lead, serve customers better and create more team spirit.

He leads workshops, seminars and coaches in Sensational Presentation Technique, Courageous Selling Strategies, Sensational Customer Service, Exposition Excellence, Sensational Leadership and Building team-spirit. All of his work is focused on the conscious and efficient use of your body language and emotions to communicate powerfully and attract more loyal business.

In his Sensational Soft Skills Toolbox series, Larsson shares both new and timeless tips, tricks, and tools he's assembled during his thirty years of sales, management, training, and coaching. His goal is to help leaders learn those soft skills needed to succeed by communicating more powerfully, yet with less friction. "Sensational Presentation Skills" was his first offering that capitalizes on his experience of training hundreds of people to present better using conscious body language. This book is his second. He currently lives outside of Stockholm, Sweden with his family and loves to travel.

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