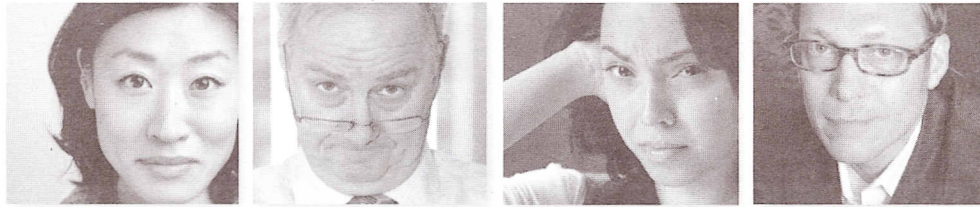


HR Managers' Unspoken Messages: Your Face Says It All



Do you think about what messages you send to your coworkers by the smile or stoic look on your face? What about that quick glance away from your interviewee, a broad grin for a new employee, or rolling your eyes when listening to one more story about why your employee is late?

The face is the richest source of information, adding meaningful nuances to the words you say. **Because we're communicating even when we don't realize it, it's crucial to become conscious of your behavior—to transform subconscious behavior into intentional and strategic choices.** A lot happens in the face to provide information about a person's feelings. Women tend to display more facial expressions than men, and more accurately interpret facial expressions. Some suggest that because women are often viewed as having a lower status, they must rely on all clues to understand those with greater status, and part of those clues are facial expressions.

Ever wonder why a woman is smiling at work? Women not only smile more often than men do, but some seem to smile all the time. Happy, sad, stressed, confused—some women have learned to smile to please others.

Does your workplace have an office cheerleader or office mascot—cheery, bouncy, and always smiling? Coworkers are sometimes left wondering if she (and less often, he) ever has a serious or pensive thought. Women are usually the caregivers in the workplace, making sure that everyone's happy, no one's fighting, and people are getting along with each other. A woman's smile can tone down a conflict, start other people smiling, show agreement, and even be an attempt to

ingratiate herself with others.

Watch it! If a woman smiles too much, it begins to impact her credibility and she risks not being taken seriously. That constant smile will be seen as a fake, meaningless expression.

Men learn to hide their emotions using fewer facial expressions and to smile only when the occasion calls for it. People who already have power and status positions (generally men, in many workplaces) don't need to smile. Men tend to practice "selective smiling."

Women who don't meet the cultural expectation of smiling all the time have been viewed as more unhappy, tenser, and not as carefree as men who don't smile. Some people may even ask what's wrong; they've been conditioned to look for women's smiles. According to communication and English professors Teri and Michael Gamble, in the United States, African-American women smile less than African-American men; Caucasian women smile more than Caucasian men. Asians may smile and laugh to hide their real emotions, such as shock or anger.

Men and women can consider Code Switching to improve their communication skills. **Code Switching** is the ability to use your knowledge of two or more cultures or languages and switch between them, depending on the situation, to best communicate your message. In this case, we're

looking at men's and women's communication styles and consciously choosing what style would best deliver your message in a particular situation. Consider a few Code-Switching tips:

- Women: Smile selectively. You don't have to be smiling all the time—you'll only diminish its meaning when you

Calendar

December 2009

- 9 CHRA Holiday Social
Cool River Café
8000 East Belleview Avenue
Greenwood Village, CO

January 2010

- 22 CHRA Human Resources Conference - HR Beyond... Strategies for the New Frontier
Invesco Field at Mile High

February 2010

- 17 CHRA Member Program - North and South

really do want to smile.

- Women and Men: Be congruent. Never smile when you are delivering a serious message.
- Women: Use the smile as a tool to consciously convey a message or positive connection.
- Men: Smile more often. Smiling won't make you look foolish or lessen your status.

This article is adapted from Dr. Claire Damken Brown and Dr. Audrey Nelson's new book, *Code Switching: How to Talk So Men Will Listen*, Alpha Books, 2009.



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