Transcription - Non Verbal Communication

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside
Exec. Today we're going to challenge Fulyana because we're going to talk about non-verbal communication. Those of you who have experienced Fulyana in person will know that there is a fair bit of communication that happens verbally when she's in the room and not so much of the non-verbal because there's just no time to do the hand gestures or the body language.

But we're not actually going to talk about body language and that style of non-verbal communication. We're going to talk more about behavior and patterns of behavior in terms of what that is communicating to your team or to your work colleagues. So I shall let her speak, because for those of you who have
been listening weekly, she hasn't had the chance to say much in the last few weeks so we're going to have to have catch up today.

Well, thank you, Kim. But this non-verbal communication is not something I like after the verbal communication but now seriously, people can express things like support, approval, disapproval, engagement, concern, confidence, all these things by just the way they behave. And we sometimes, I mean with communication we talk about the style, the method, we talk about body language, eye contact but in this case try and think about what are you saying in your actions. And let's break it down a bit and let's take some examples to make it real.

So the first thing is if you're at the meeting and you're already at the meeting and you're sitting there but you're not saying anything and you never say anything, what is that saying? Are you engaged? Not engaged? Are you there because you have to be there or not? Would people say or are you sitting
there in judgment? So you've got to think about that.

If you're at the meeting and then you absolutely take over, what is that saying? I'm not interested in somebody else's views, I know what I'm doing and I'm taking over because I know the best answer and I also want to show off. Well you're not just being enthusiastic and you need to reign it in.

Another thing for example we talk about culture, we talk about a place where it's inclusive and treat people like people and not just work horses etc. And then say, the culture is that you have morning tea for people's birthday and you're
one of the people that never turns up because, guess what, you're really busy. What is that saying? This is saying, "Oh poor guy, he's really busy, poor woman she's busy, we're all busy, you just don't care about others and you don't practice what we, as an organisation, value." And you've probably never thought about it, you thought, "No, I was really really busy, I didn't mean to insult or anything, it's just morning tea, just a bit of cake, but you're communicating a lot through that action or choice of action.

In that situation, what concerns me is that there are some people who don't see that activity as worthwhile, they see it as a waste of time, they see it as it's a bit like letting smokers go out of the building, so someone's getting an extra bit of time off for want of a better phrase rather than me who has to work and me who has to make these deadlines and I haven't got time for

the socialising, they just don't see the value in that activity. That to me, is a reflection of a culture that is a subculture, that is being allowed to develop in an organisation.

So do you insist that everyone stops? Okay, we're going to have morning tea
and we're all going to stop for this period of time? It's not the, oh yeah, someone's going to get it all ready and so they have an hour off where everyone else just has the 15 minutes, does it rotate through and so then it becomes this great exercise of what happens when it's the birthday morning tea rather than the spontaneous gathering of people and then we read so much into that situation that reflects back on our management style and we start to, I know, start to resent the fact that we're expected to do these things. We're expected to contribute and all of the other things that happen around that community, work community, side of things that when you are.

That, I think, is where the non-verbal pattern of behaviour communication happens.

With that, I'm sure that there's lots of people who absolutely say, "Oh God, I have to go and fancy making us go." I totally agree. I'm putting it back on the individual rather than the process because it's an opportunity. You could use it whichever way you like. Have a five-minute breather if you want the very minimum or have the opportunity to say hi and get to know people. Those things are also being done online so it's, you know, they still have virtual morning tea and all of that. So it still applies and I think the individual should see it as an opportunity, that's all, and do with it what you like. If what you like is walking away from your desk for a few minutes, it is healthy or from your computer, whatever. And the other thing is, getting to meet people or talk to them. It's an opportunity that is getting less and less available.

I'd be interested to hear from those that are listening on whether they see that there's been a change in people's patterns. So do the ones who didn't turn up
when it was in person, do they turn up when it's online? Does that give you some insight when you're managing them into their social skills, their interest in social activity? Are they more comfortable doing it online because they know they can limit themselves at the time they have, to know when they have to arrive, they know when they can leave. And because I think, in my experience, that's been the area that's greatest concern in terms of those interactions. And to a certain extent about going to meetings as well. How soon, how early do you arrive to a meeting? We know with Zoom, that generally we can get into a meeting five minutes before. So that's already managed for us. But often, particularly for people who haven't used it very regularly, I will have someone, because I can see them sign in, I will have someone sign in half an hour before the meeting. They're not necessarily going to sit there and wait for me to turn up. But they just want to be sure that they're there and that technology is working and they're ready for when it is time to have the meeting.

So we're seeing that pattern of behavior made more obvious because of the technology, because I don't think it's something that they would do if it was an in-person meeting. And they're not looking for the interaction. But it is about their pattern of behavior and it is something we need to take note of, is that they're, you know, to me, they're so committed to being at the meeting and being present, that they're making sure that everything's ready half an hour before. And yes, they might do that in person, but they wouldn't be at the meeting room. They'd be doing it at their desk. So we see a different pattern. We see an overall

pattern of behavior that is their commitment to the meeting
and the meeting time.

And just in thinking about that and thinking about these people, they're often the ones who don't say anything at the meeting. So I have a better sense that they are committed to the meeting by that pattern of behavior that says they're ready half an hour before even if they don't say anything, I know that they wanted to be at the meeting. Where if it was in person, they might get themselves ready for the meeting, but I wouldn't see them preparing. I would see them turn up to the meeting, not say anything and go back to their desk. And I get a different sense of their commitment and their interest in the meeting than I do when it's online and I know that they've prepared themselves, I get that reassurance that they've prepared themselves before even if they don't say anything at the meeting. An interesting thought that's just come to me while we've been talking about difference in meeting attendance and that it doesn't mean the same thing online as I might have assumed in person.

It's a good point. That also applies to what they call staff meetings, like all staff meetings or some refer to them as their town hall meetings, whether it's in person or virtual. In the past, I've come across people who say they didn't turn up to the town hall meeting. They're in a senior role and they didn't turn up to the town hall meetings because they already knew what's going to be communicated and because they use their time differently. I find that irresponsible, I find that selfish. I know they're strong words. But it's really more about me, me, me, than thinking
what about the others. What about the people communicating the message? Aren't you there to support that or be seen to be supporting it? Aren't you there to be able to answer some specific questions that might be relevant to your area, about people, just giving them that opportunity by you being present? And even if you said nothing, it still shows, it's still communicating that you're part of this and you're there in whatever capacity. And I think that's to me, is that thing with our own busy-ness, it's I can't afford the time, I was doing something really important, why are the people picking on me. No, we've got other responsibility in the communication we give inadvertently. And there message we're communicating is without realizing it. We need to pay attention to that.

It's also, I guess, an area where, as managers, we can get really confused. It's almost information overload that looking at situations and thinking about what does that really mean and what are they telling me and what's the body language and what's the non-verbal interaction that we're having. We're not suggesting that you analyse every situation but we do want you to start thinking about the message that is being sent and whether that's something, I guess, just in listening about the town hall meetings, whether it's something that is an organisation-wide miscommunication that you are seen to be valuable if you are too busy to attend a meeting that is important for everyone to hear and to be at. And that as managers, as leaders, we are not emphasising the importance
but the relative importance of attending meetings as opposed to doing the day-to-day activities. And that we have talked about and we've had other people talk about - time management and organising your day and assessing priorities, that we are still these days in a routine, or maybe we have fallen back into
an old routine, of assessing priorities based on how important it makes us look rather than getting the job done. And at the time where we were not all working in the one place, we did set priorities. We did organise our work and our home life and the conflicting priorities that we

had in that situation. Why are we not transferring the skills that we developed in that period of time back into the workplace now? Because we obviously developed skills to manage that whole situation that was completely unexpected. So if we now fall back into the situations and the work environments that we know a bit better and so we're just going back into old habits and they're not necessarily the best habits for business to continue.

And a lot of that is really more just reflecting on what we do, saying am I? Or you might reflect and say no, no, I'm happy with what I'm doing and I'm going
to continue to do it. Or I never thought of that bit, I thought I was doing the right thing and the message might be different. As always, what we're doing is just providing you some thing to think about and to reflect on for your own work situation. If you are concerned about how you are reading situations then drop us a line. We're always happy to talk about that as a case study and to give you our views on what we would do in those situations. And we know that the case
studies are very popular with our listeners. But for now let's leave the topic of non-verbal communication that is not about body language. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.