

# What Technology Consultants Should Know About Communicating

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Years ago when businesses realized that the way they could gain market shares depended upon technology, it was easy for technical consultants to close business with sheer technical competence. Now, customers have choices. They are a lot more choosy about whom they hire. In addition to technical expertise, they look for consultants who demonstrate they are confident, knowledgeable, personable and real. They look for consultants who are good communicators.

## Why?

Most technical solutions are costly and often require an on-going relationship that can last for a year or even longer. Because the solution is expensive, customers do not want to make a mistake or get criticized for hiring the wrong people. They want people with whom they can consult in the most challenging situations. They want people their staff finds comfortable and easy to understand.

## What You Should Do

To be successful today, technical consultants should take how they communicate seriously. They should get feedback on the way they are perceived. A negative impression can jeopardize the project or the ability to be given entry to other business units within the organization.

It is important to realize that your body and voice affect how people perceive you. For, example, if you do not look your customers in the eye when you talk to them or if your posture is weak, they can see you as unconfident. Perception is reality. No one wants a technical consultant that makes a bad impression.

There are three skills will make you look composed or confident. They are posture, eye contact and pausing.

## Posture

Mothers have harped about posture for years. They are right! It is important to stand up straight or sit up straight. It shows you are interested and care. It demonstrates your confidence. If you are sitting at meeting, make sure your feet are under your chair so that your energy comes forward. Make sure that your hands are on the table instead of in your lap. If they are on the table, you will use them.

If you are making a presentation where there are more than seven attendees, stand up. It will facilitate them being able to hear you and see you. When you are standing, your feet should be about hip width apart. Your weight should be evenly balanced on both feet. If you are not using your hands, they should rest comfortable at your sides, not folded in front of you or behind your back and not in your pockets. The impression you want your posture to give is that you are open and not hiding anything.

## Eye Contact

Eye contact will also give the impression that you are not hiding anything. We have all heard the expression, "the eyes are the windows to the soul." The assumption of your listeners is that if you look them in the eye, you are honest. If you don't, you are deceptive or unconfident. We want our listeners to understand. By looking at each person for a full sentence or thought as many times as you can while you are explaining your product or solution, your listeners will feel you care about them and just want them to get it. They will conclude you know your stuff.

## Pausing

Pausing is also important. When you pause, you can think. You can choose your words carefully and be accurate. You can eliminate

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“clutter words,” those pesky “ums” and “ahs.”  
You can make your voice sincere, passionate.

Pausing gives your listeners time to think also.  
It helps them to digest the technical information  
you have just given them. It allows them  
time to think of their questions. When their  
questions are answered, you score.

In todays down economy, good communication  
skills are essential for anyone who is a technical  
consultant. It is not what you know that counts but  
how you communicate it. With good communica-  
tion skills, people feel they can trust you. They see  
you as real and confident. They want to close busi-  
ness with you.

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