

**Understanding the Unsaid** by Kathi Guiney SPHR, GPHR, SCP, President, YES! Your Human Resources Solution & Jocelyn Schamber, Creative Director, Fuzzy Red Pen

Have you ever wished you could read your boss's mind? OK, so these tips won't turn you into telepathic mutant Professor X, but they may make you a virtuoso of the nonverbal. We spend 80 percent of our days communicating, and 90 percent of that communication is silent. If we study the silence, we can catch what's *really* being said, from people's moods and mindsets, to their interests and understanding of the message--all of which can help us improve our business relations.

How to interpret nonverbal cues:

- **Body language.** Floppy or firm handshake? Steady or wandering eye contact? Be observant as every gesture and expression shares valuable data you won't get from words alone. Few will be as obvious as assuming the Superman pose: ready to take on challenges!
- **Appearances.** A pressed, clean outfit (Superman cape optional) conveys the desire to make a positive impression. Bedhead and mismatched socks convey less emphasis on first impressions and more of a "dog ate my alarm clock" morning.
- **Verbal-nonverbal disconnects.** The lips say, "I'd love to join the picnic committee!" but the crossed arms and set jaw tell the true story: "I will call in sick that day!"

Use your newfound expertise to:

- **Steer meetings and conversations.** Glazed eyes, yawns, and playing Angry Birds are strong signals. Pay attention to these nonverbal cues to gauge the audience's interest, their reaction to your message, and whether someone else is waiting to speak.
- **Evaluate job candidates.** Observe how they wait in the lobby, how they shake your hand, how they engage with others while waiting. You may get a glimpse of how well candidates match your company's culture.

As a virtuoso of the nonverbal, you'll get the whole picture by keeping your eyes peeled. Most important, your improved understanding of others will make your business dealings more meaningful. And you don't have to be a telepathic X-Man to do it!