

## VISUAL CUES PART II

The following article is from “The Tipping Point [How little things can make a BIG Difference]” by Malcolm Gladwell. This book is brimming with fresh, thought-provoking ideas and concepts. It’s easy to follow and fun to read. ANYONE going into Management or going into business on their own or contemplating making changes in their life, or just wanting to know how change happens, should invest the few hours it takes to read The Tipping Point.

However, the part of the book discussed below could be very important to your Upward Mobility within DMV or outside....

In a prior piece on non-verbal communication during Oral exams & Hiring interviews, we analyzed “Why Visual and Vocal Interview Cues Can Affect Interviewers' Judgments and Predict Job Performance”, 1999 by Dr. Timothy DeGroot and Dr. Stephan J. Motowidlo.

Specifically, we went into detail concerning the importance of Nonverbal **VISUAL** cues:

1. Appropriate attractiveness (clean, neat, well groomed, appropriately dressed, etc.).
2. Eye contact (eyes up, looking towards the Oral Panel interviewers...NOT Staring).
3. Body orientation (‘lean’ towards the panel, not away. No slouching, but not ramrod straight).
4. Smiling (not grinning. And there’s *no smiling* when discussing ‘grim’ problems).
5. Hand gestures (for emphasis and expression, NOT for making shadow puppets...).

Gladwell takes us another step forward in our understanding of how small, barely perceived gestures can help us a great deal during hiring interviews & oral exams AND when dealing with customers. Small subtle gestures can also can shoot us down. Either way, these **movements and gestures may speak far louder than the words we use**; they may influence how **we ourselves think** & see the world, and how others see us IN that world....



### FROM THE TIPPING POINT:

A large group of students were recruited for what they were **told** was a market research study on high-tech headphones. They were each given a headset and told that the company wanted to test to see how well they worked when the listener **was in motion** - dancing up and down, say, or *moving their head*. All of the students listened to songs by Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles, and then heard a radio editorial arguing that tuition at their university tuition should be raised from its present level of \$587 to \$750.

**A third** were told that while they listened to the taped radio editorial they should **nod** their heads vigorously **up and down**. The next third were told to shake their heads from **side to side**. The final third were the ‘control group’. They were told to keep their heads **still**. When they were finished, all the students were given a short questionnaire, asking them about the quality of the songs and the effect of the shaking. Slipped in at the end was the question the experimenters really wanted an answer to: "What do you feel would be an appropriate dollar amount for undergraduate tuition per year?"

The students who kept their heads **still were unmoved** by the editorial; the current tuition amount was about right. Those who shook their heads from **side to side** as they listened to the

editorial (even though they **thought** they were simply testing headset quality) **disagreed strongly** with the proposed increase. They wanted tuition to fall to \$467 a year. Those who were told to nod their heads **up and down**, meanwhile, found the editorial very persuasive. They wanted tuition to rise, on average, to \$646. The simple act of moving their heads up and down, for an entirely different reason - was sufficient to cause them to recommend a policy that would take money out of their own pockets. Somehow head nodding **alone**, in the end, mattered most **significantly**.

This (**and related studies**) show that **little things can** make as much of a difference as big things; [that visual clues can unconsciously affect people's minds; even our own].

In the headphone study, the editorial had no impact on those whose heads were still. It wasn't particularly persuasive. But as soon as listeners **started nodding**, it became very persuasive. Visual cues are much more subtle and for that reason much more insidious, and that much harder to insulate ourselves against.

The second implication of these studies is that **nonverbal cues** are **as (or more)** important than **verbal** cues. *The subtle circumstances surrounding how we say things may matter more than WHAT we say.* Simple physical movements and observations can have a profound effect on how we feel

The third -and perhaps most important - implication of these studies is that persuasion often works in ways that we do not appreciate. It's not that **smiles and nods** are **subliminal** messages; they are straightforward and on the surface. It's just that they are **incredibly subtle**. If you asked the head nodders why they wanted tuition to increase so dramatically - tuition that would come out pockets - none of them would say, because I was nodding my head while I listened to that editorial. They would probably say that it was because they found the editorial particularly insightful or intelligent. They would attribute their attitudes to some more obvious, logical cause.



In this one study, the 'nods' (visual cues) changed the subject's *own* minds; NOT an oral panel's. But if something so subtle and unrelated can affect our own thinking, it could have an equally profound affect on those observing us.

When answering a question with 'positive words' are you sending the opposite message by subtly shaking you head back and forth?

The interviewers need to know that, "Yes; this applicant is confident they can DO this job." But if your body movements are negative or defensive, your words may be drowned out by your actions.

Asked, 'Have you ever been in a situation you just couldn't handle,' is the primary answer the interviewer receives, 'Yes', because that's what your body says? (AND, are you **convincing yourself**, right there and then that you CAN'T do the job? WHAT is that doing for your confidence at the worst possible time?????)

ACTIONS speak louder than words, the old saying goes, and apparently that's more true than we've believed in the past. It becomes even more apparent that those who want to promote should make liberal use of video cameras and mock orals. Once you have yourself on video tape answering position-level-appropriate questions, TURN OFF THE SOUND. WATCH your eye, hand and head movements. WHAT are you silently saying?

Once you're aware of what your body is saying about your abilities, you can work to reduce any unwanted, extraneous movements and let your WORDS speak loudest for you.