

ACTIVATE YOUR NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

By Af Henrik Horn Andersen,
hha@implement.dk, Maria
Hansen, maha@implement.dk
and Lene Kobbarnagel
Implement Consulting Group

An article on the conscious use of body language and space to master interaction at meetings and workshops and on training days

Introduction

Do you know that feeling when you have to initiate a meeting and know exactly what you are going to say, but halfway through your introduction you notice that you do not have everyone's attention? Certain participants are sitting back with an absent look on their faces. Others seem to be listening but are not being affected. Despite the fact that the content of what you are presenting is good, you are not getting the reaction you expected. Something is standing in your way, so you are not establishing proper interaction with your environment.

Use yourself and the space around you when communicating

As leaders, facilitators and consultants, we cannot help but communicate with our bodies. We cannot set off one morning with a bag full of a good agenda, manuscripts and Post-its and think: "No. Today I'm giving my body language a day off." So, we might just as well master the act of communicating well with our bodies and the space around us.

This article provides answers to the question of how you, as a leader, facilitator and consultant, can train your interactive skills by consciously communicating with the use of body and space.

Three truths about your body language

You do not know what signal you are giving off until you hear other people say it.

When something feels unnatural, it is because you have not done it often enough.

You can influence other people's behaviour by changing your own body language.

This article provides answers to how, in the moments you are on the floor, you can create positive chemistry in the team or the group by adopting an appropriate position both in terms of your body and the space surrounding you. Communicating consciously with the use of body and space takes practice. In addition, you can make use of the Feedback Using The Mixer resource at the end of this article.

The article is part of a series of articles, which provide answers to how you can facilitate participatory processes. If you would like to learn something about how to engineer a positive training or meeting process, you can find answers in two other articles in the series: "Training" and "Facilitating". In the article that follows, we use the term "facilitator" as an overall expression for any leader, consultant or chairperson responsible for facilitating a process of development amongst a group of people.

Body language dominates your communication

Studies of personal communication reveal that, whenever there is doubt about a message, we ascribe 93% of the overall meaning of that message to body language and tone of voice. The actual words of the message take up only 7%. That means that if a facilitator kicks off a participatory session by saying "I am really keen to hear your thoughts about the process of reorganisation" while slowly retreating in the room with arms crossed and allowing their gaze to drift off, then their overall expression will give participants the impression that what the facilitator is saying is something they have to say and not something they really want to say. They come across as lacking in credibility.

As a result, the participants will not make a genuine contribution, and the process will not achieve the desired effect. However, the reason the facilitator happened to move backwards in that situation might be quite different. Maybe the room was chilly, and the facilitator wanted to grab his/her sweater.

Maybe he/she wanted plenty of time to get to the sound system to switch on some music. But what matters in this situation is that their intention was at odds with the signal they were giving off. Their body language "cries out" and invests their words with an entirely different meaning.

Body language training: A shortcut to credibility and positive chemistry

Facilitators who make a conscious use of body and space succeed at creating interaction at two levels:

1. They succeed at creating interaction between their own bodies and their own words, and this creates **credibility**.
2. They succeed at creating interaction in the group, and this creates **positive chemistry**.

Credibility

When you succeed at giving off a signal of credibility, your audience puts their trust in you as a person and in the message you are attempting to convey. As a basic rule, the greater the consistency between body and words, the greater the trust.

The 55-38-7 rule

Albert Mehrabian, an American professor of psychology, has studied the significance of body language in terms of how we form an impression of other people. The main conclusion Mehrabian comes to is that when body language, tone of voice and message are at odds, body language and tone of voice take over from the actual content of the words. His results reveal that body language accounts for 55% of our sympathy with the communicator, tone of voice accounts for 38%, while words account for a mere 7%. This has become the much-used 55-38-7 rule. That means that the use of body language can influence the impression others form of you.



When there is consistency, you give off the signal that you can vouch for what you are saying. Even more importantly, you give off the signal that you own yourself 100% in terms of what you do. This evokes an impression of professionalism, professional security and competence, which means that we, as an audience, feel secure and can concentrate 100% of our energy and attention on the actual task.

Positive chemistry

Once you succeed at creating positive chemistry in groups, participants start to trust each other. If you come up with an appropriate seating arrangement and position yourself in the space in such a way that participants feel they want to make a contribution, it will help increase trust amongst the participants. When there is a high level of trust in a group, the group will perform better.

Get to know the rules of interaction

Interaction is regulated to a great extent by body language and spatial rules relating to how people interact with one another in a space. Just think how radically the mood of a group can change the moment you move to a space with a completely different seating arrangement. As a facilitator, it is crucial to know the rules of body language and space, which govern interaction. That will enable you to make conscious use of them to create the effect you desire.

Non-verbal communication training is an extremely effective way – for some a straightforward shortcut – to consciously create positive relationships characterised by trust and positive chemistry.

Why we resort to theatre

There is one area of theory and practice, which, since the turn of the last century, has dealt extensively with how to acquire such a thorough knowledge of the rules of interaction so that by a conscious use of body, space and words, one can portray any conceivable type of interaction: the technique of acting¹.

For facilitators, the use of this knowledge is an obvious choice. However, the techniques of acting require a certain amount of translation if they are to be used meaningfully in an organisational context. Lene Kobbarnagel has spent the last several years carefully selecting and translating the techniques of acting, which are appropriate to bring into play in the context of meetings, presentations and training sessions², and has brought them all together in a tool called “The Mixer”.

The Mixer will teach you how to turn up and turn down your own volume

Interaction is about taking up appropriate space in a relationship. If you take up too much space, you dominate the relationship, and the people you are talking to will either hold back or overassert themselves. If you take up too little space, there is a likelihood that the people you are talking to will not take you entirely seriously. The more you turn up **your own volume**, the more distinctive, clear and dominant you will be in the interaction. On the other hand, the more you turn down your **own volume**, the more space you pass on to others.

As facilitators, we need to be able to alternate between **taking up a lot of space** and **taking up less space**. For example, if you want to kick off a meeting with a strong introduction, it is a good idea to take up more space than when, at a later point in the same meeting, you have to facilitate an exchange of ideas when the criterion for success is for the participants to take up space and make a contribution. The Mixer is an overall picture, which shows you how to turn up and turn down your own volume in an interaction.

Six rules you can activate

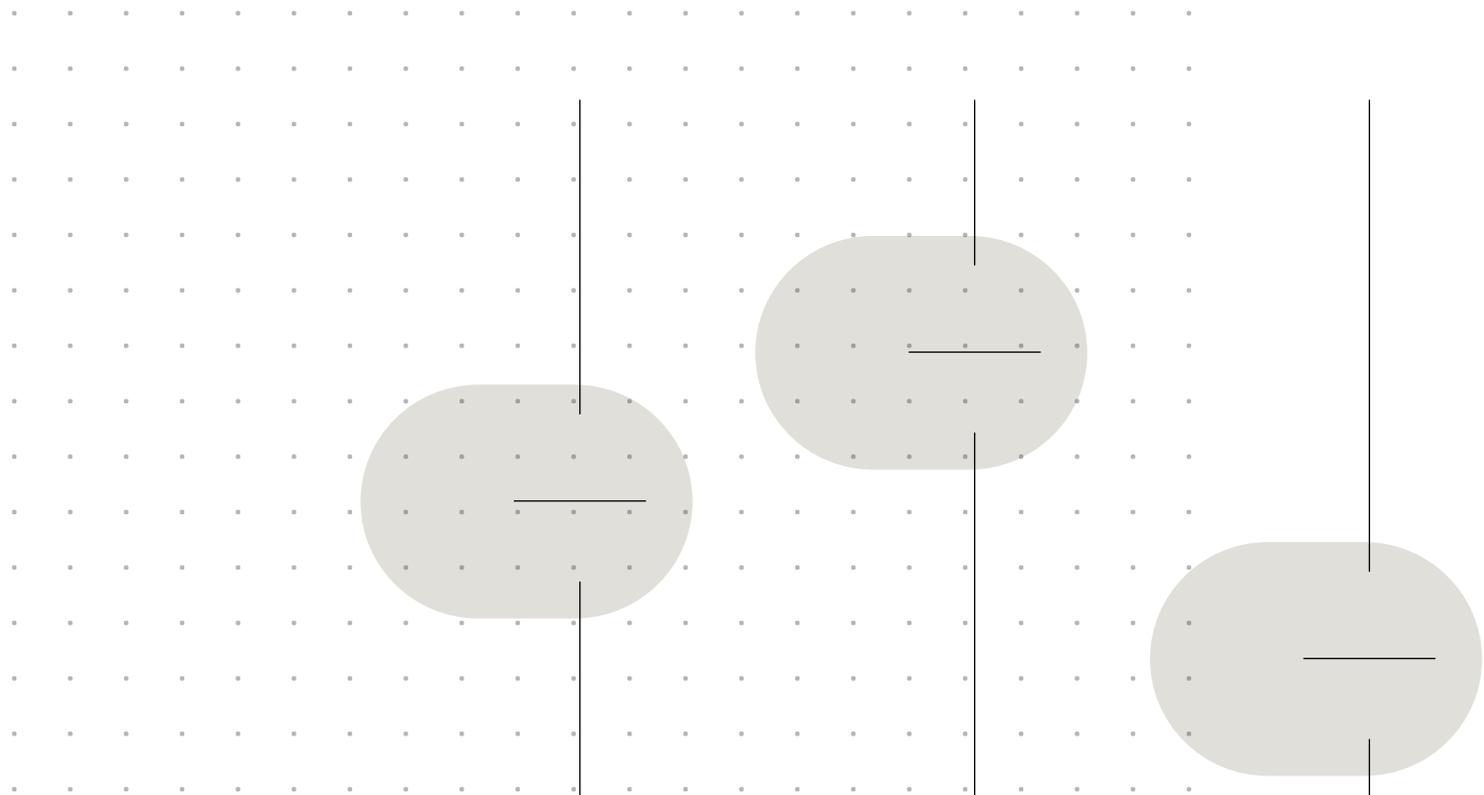
The Mixer comprises a total of six faders, each of which represents a rule, which has a substantial impact on an interaction. The six effects, which you can use to turn up and down your volume with the Mixer’s faders are: attentiveness, authority, authenticity, empowerment and inclusion.

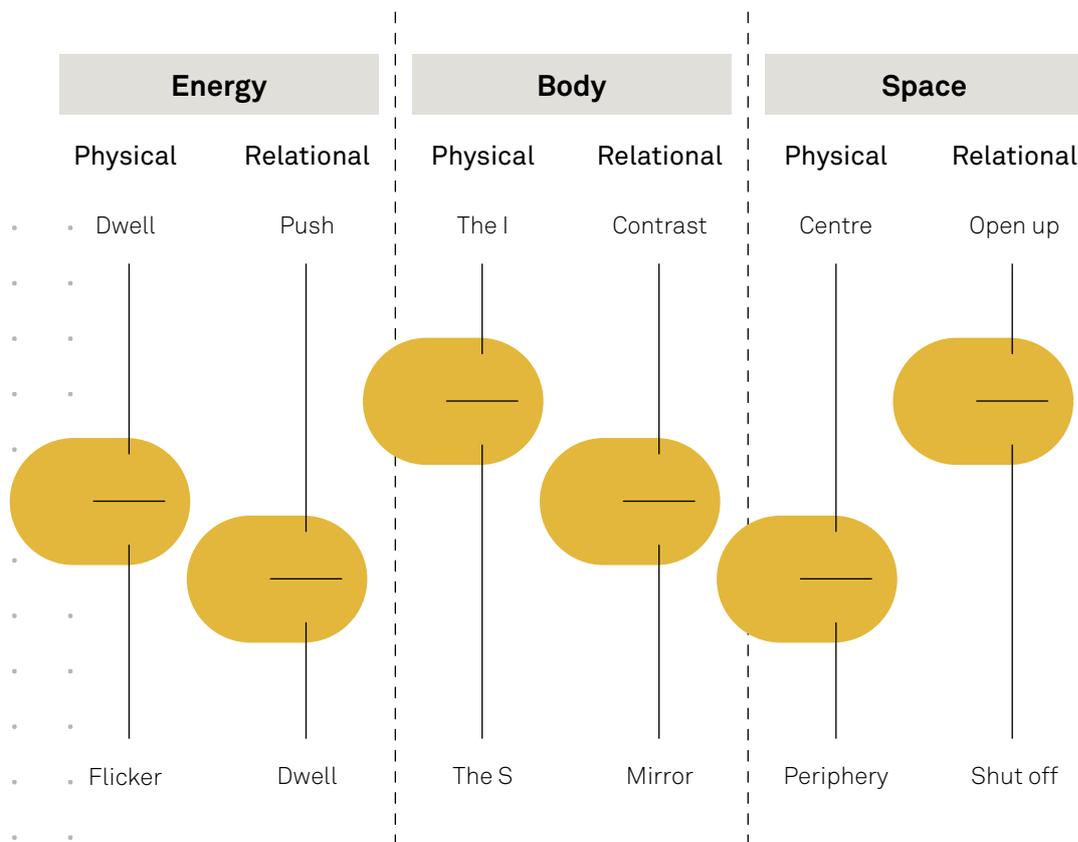
By activating the appropriate rule, you create each effect. The six rules are divided into three categories: energy, body and space. You can work on each category in two dimensions: a physical dimension and a relational dimension.

The Mixer enables you to work on trying out one effect at a time. You can select the effect you wish to create and then practise using the particular fader, which results in that effect. For example, if you want to work on regulating your empowerment, you can work on Centring and Periphery. If you want to work on regulating your authenticity, you can work on the I and the S. You can also use the Mixer to provide body language-related feedback to colleagues and others. This makes it a useful common tool for training. The Mixer provides you with a precise, conceptual apparatus and a more acute focus when decoding your own and other people's body language.

How the Mixer works

Work on body language is a subtle kind of work. Just a very slight displacement in the body can have a huge effect on interaction. For example, if you slightly change the angle at which you are facing other people, the chemistry can improve substantially. Using the Mixer's faders, you can turn up the volume just a little, or you can turn it up a lot. It is essential to practise the subtleties! Your mastery of subtleties will achieve the best effects. We will now take you through the Mixer's six faders.





The six rules

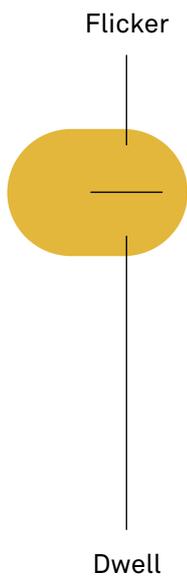
	Energy	Body	Space
Physical dimension	Dwell/Flicker regulates attentiveness via work on eye contact, pauses and breathing.	The I/The S regulates authenticity via work on the way you stand and sit.	Centre/Periphery regulates empowerment via work on your physical position in the space.
Relational dimension	Push/Pull regulates authority via work on leaning towards other people or leaning away from other people.	Mirror/Contrast regulates the chemistry via work on copying or creating a contrast to other people.	Open up/Shut off regulates inclusion via work on opening or closing your personal space.

Fader 1

Effect:
Absent
Effective
Stressed
Ironic

What Flicker looks like:

- Brief eye contact
- The gaze wanders
- Short breaths
- No or few pauses



Effect:
Attentive
Curious
Interested

What Dwell looks like:

- Prolonged eye contact
- Deep breaths
- Lots of pauses

Fader 1 regulates attentiveness via Dwell and Flicker

Effect

Dwell and Flicker enable you to regulate the intensity of your attentiveness. This affects the tempo and the degree of immersion it is possible to work at. If you turn up the Dwell volume, people will perceive you as a highly attentive facilitator. This encourages participants to really get stuck in and to work with a high degree of trust in you and in each other. You make room for others, and you come across as extremely interested in the people you are talking to. If, on the other hand, you turn up your Flicker volume, you will come across as more bound up in the material you are working on. This may make you come across as absent in the relationship. Flicker gives off a signal of efficiency and can be used to advantage in certain situations, when it is time to move on from a discussion to another issue. Flicker is also effective when changing track. Using Flicker, you can quickly change the energy from one state to another.

How to do it:

1. Extend/shorten eye contact

You dwell and flicker by extending or shortening the length of your attention. There are several ways of doing this. The most effective way is to extend the length of your eye contact. The effect of long eye contact is a high degree of attentiveness. The effect of short eye contact is a small degree of attentiveness.

One summer, when travelling around France, Lene observed that people in France hold eye contact with strangers on the street for about 1 second before averting their gaze. This creates an atmosphere of politeness and warmth on the streets of French towns. In Denmark, we never seek out the eye contact of strangers. If, by accident, we get it, we avert our gaze after a nanosecond. This creates an atmosphere of frenzied, unsympathetic behaviour on the pedestrian streets of Denmark. If you desire a warmer culture in the workplace, try increasing the length of your eye contact. At meetings, as a facilitator you can increase the length of your eye contact with the individual participants. 3-4 seconds of eye contact with each participant is an adequate length of time for creating attentiveness.

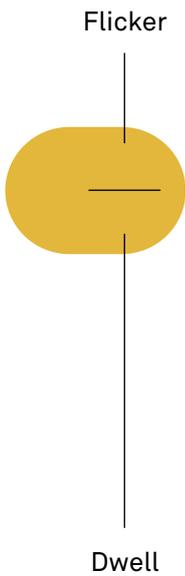
2. Make a conscious use of breathing

You can also turn up the Dwell and Flicker volume by making a conscious use of breathing. Long, deep breaths increase a sense of attentiveness, while quick, short intakes of breath create a more frenzied atmosphere. You can turn up the Dwell volume by breathing in deeply through the nose.

3. Alternate Dwell and Flicker

Alternating between Dwell and Flicker produces a positive dynamic. If you only increase the Dwell volume, the atmosphere may become too therapeutic and ineffective. If the group of people you are working with are silent and reluctant to start a discussion, it might be worth turning up your Flicker volume and providing the room with a boost of energy.

Fader 1



Tips and tricks for getting more power from dwell/flicker:

- Pause for 3 seconds after making a point. In large gatherings, you can pause for up to 5 seconds after making an important point.
- Pause for a brief moment just before and just after a key word.
- When you finish sentences, always maintain eye contact with the people you are communicating with.
- Think of pauses as your unique opportunity to establish contact with the people you are communicating with. Use pauses to look people in the eyes.
- Maintain your posture when you end your sentences (most people have a habit of sitting back in their chair when they have finished speaking).
- Vary the tempo of your speech so that you dwell on important points and flicker with examples – this generates an excellent flow.

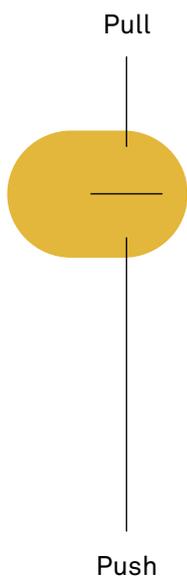
A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

Fader 2

Effect:
Humble
Curious
Appreciative

What Pull looks like:

- Leaning back
- Leaning away from the people you are talking to
- As if you are pulling away or drawing your environment towards you



Effect:
Authority
Dominance

What Push looks like:

- Leaning forward
- Leaning forward towards the people you are talking to
- Squashing or pressing forward

Fader 2 activates your authority via Push and Pull

Effect

Push and Pull regulate who dominates the interaction. If you turn up the Push volume, you will give off more signals of willpower. The result is that people will perceive you as a person with great authority. If you feel you are often ignored, it is a good idea to turn up the Push volume. For people with a small frame, it is a good idea to turn up the Push volume in order to take up more appropriate space in relationships.

On the other hand, turning up the Pull volume gives off more signals of good-will, humility and service-mindedness. People of a bigger build often benefit from learning to turn up the Pull volume. It helps them compensate for the space they naturally take up in relationships, thus achieving balance in the interaction.

As a facilitator, you can use Push to deal with resistance. In situations in which you encounter critical questions, you can choose to deploy appreciative verbal language while at the same time turning up the Push volume. This invests your body language with authority and your verbal language with appreciation and courtesy. It provides a great interplay between words and body.

Avoid overdoing it

If you combine tough verbal language with tough body language, thus conveying a tough message, you will be overdoing it. When all the signals you transmit are at full force, you will come across as over-emphatic and predominantly manipulative. As an alternative, try combining emphatic body language (the I, Push and Centre) with a positive facial expression (smiling and eye contact) and appreciative verbal language. This will help you to achieve a powerful interplay between body and words.

How to do it:

You push by leaning forward towards the people you talk to so that you stand approximately 2-10 cm in front of the centre of your body, which runs from head to tailbone. The more you lean forward, the more you push and turn up your authority and domination. You can turn up the Push by leaning forward with different qualities. Lean forward as if you push something, mash something, squash something or pulp something. This will create different energies which indicate different degrees of dominance.

You pull by leaning backwards and away from the people you talk to so that you place yourself approximately 2-10 cm behind your centre. The more you lean backwards, the more you turn up your Pull and your humbleness. You can intensify the strength of pulling by using different qualities: lean backwards with the quality of releasing the hold of your lover's arms.

Tips and tricks for using push to own your message

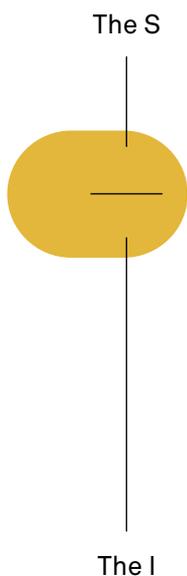
- Push at the end of sentences.
- Remain in your leaning-forward position for 2-3 seconds after you have made your point. This will make it look as if you own your words 100%.
- Push gently – but for a long time. This will give off the signal that you own yourself.
- Always push equally with both shoulders. When you push diagonally (one shoulder forward, the other back), you come across as manipulative.

Fader 3

Effect:
Sweet
Sensitive
Appealing

What the S looks like:

- Head, stomach and body in S shape
- Head tilted
- Neck exposed
- You put your weight on one hip



Effect:
Authenticity
Integrity
Credibility

What the I looks like:

- Head, stomach and body are in a straight, vertical line
- The weight is evenly distributed on both feet
- Head straight
- Long neck

Fader 3 regulates authenticity via “I” and “S”

Effect

Using the I and the S, you can influence how seriously other people perceive you. When you turn up the I volume, you give off signals of integrity, security and competence. Your credibility rises, and people will take you more seriously. If you turn up the S volume, you will give off signals of sweetness and sensitivity. Your message will come across more like a draft or an appeal. The more S you use, the more your body will say: “Come on, please accept what I’m saying.” You can also use the S to conjure up your sensitivity. If you are accustomed to delivering messages in a down-to-earth and effective manner, it might be a good idea to tell a story or come up with an example while standing in “S”. This will enhance your personality, allowing us to come into contact with the person behind the professional facade.

The I indicates that you are standing upright (like the letter I), but it also refers to the letter “I” as in “Integrity”. The S is a description of the bent position, but it also stands for “S” as in “Sweetness”.

How to do it:

Turn up the volume of your I

People standing with their head, heart and stomach in the same vertical line give a greater impression of standing 100% for what they are saying. Standing in a “straight line” means that the person is perceived as credible and with a high

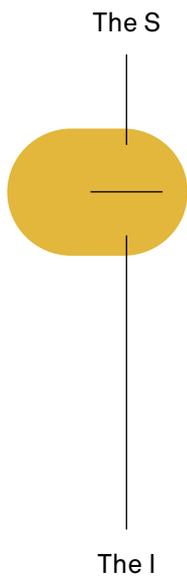
degree of integrity. In Michael Chekhov’s acting technique, the head expresses thought, the heart expresses emotions, and the stomach expresses action. So, when the head, heart and stomach are in the same vertical line, we perceive that thoughts, emotions and action are consistent with one another. We talk about being “aligned” or “in alignment”, meaning that you are integrated with yourself and so “aligned”.

Turn up your S volume

But it is much more natural for many people – especially women – to stand in “S”. This means that their head, heart and hips form an S shape. Women often tilt their heads and put their weight slightly on one hip. This results in an “S”. When we tilt our heads, we appeal to people with sweetness. We reveal our necks and give off signals of vulnerability and fragility. The S is a posture which in many contexts is interpreted as uncertainty. When women speak to a gathering of people and put their weight on one hip and tilt their head, it is likely that the audience will interpret what they are saying as a draft of something. But if they stand up straight as an “I”, the audience is much more likely to take the message seriously.

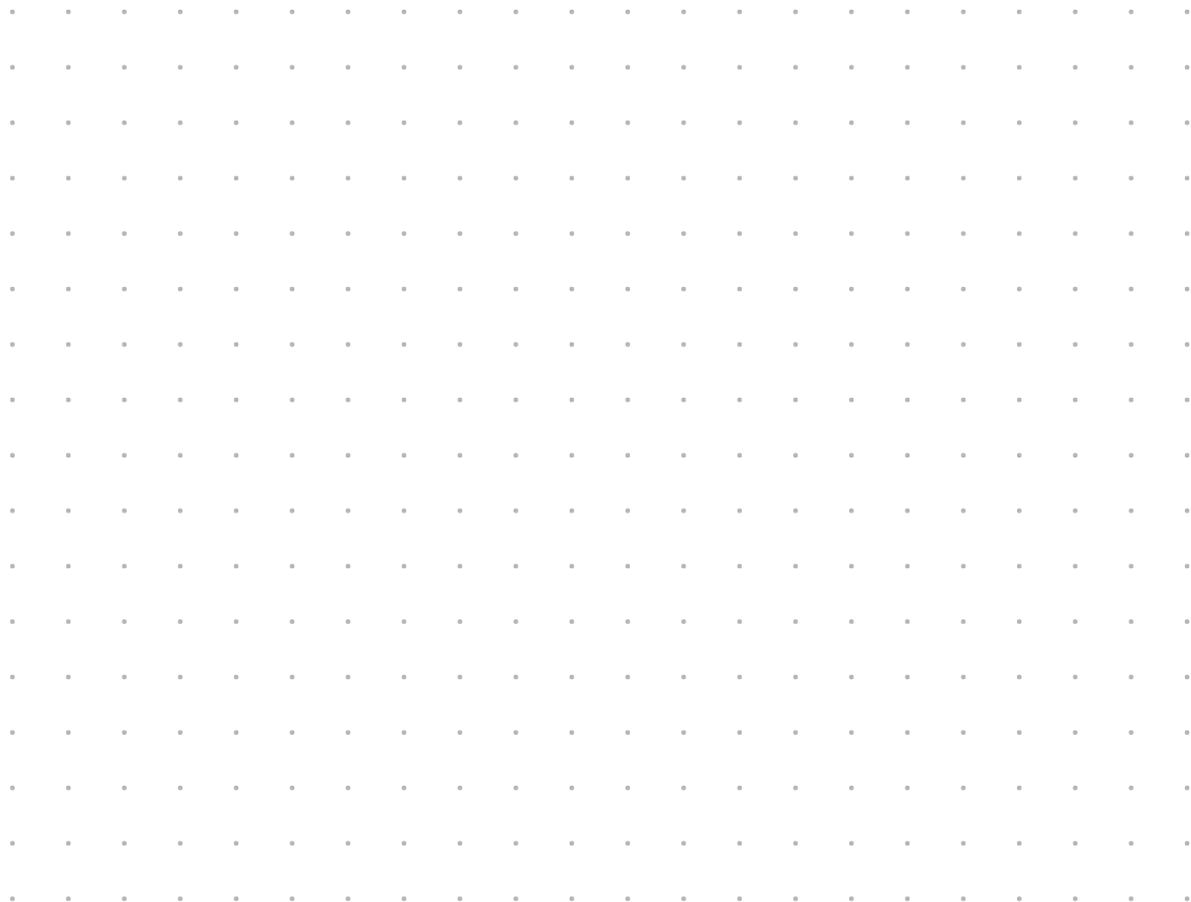
As a facilitator, you must learn your bodily habits and find out whether you are a natural I or a natural S. Practise how to master both postures so that you can make conscious use of them to regulate your authenticity.

Fader 3



Tips and tricks for getting more power from the “I”:

- Keep your head straight so that there is a straight line running from the top of the head to the tailbone when you want to get something across.
- Position your feet on the floor so that the soles of your feet are totally in contact with the floor. Even when you are communicating from behind a conference table, your upper body will give off more power if both your feet are in full contact with the floor.
- Avoid tilting your head when you are making points. When you are talking, imagine that you are balancing a saucer on your head.
- Tilt your head when making small talk. You will come across as relaxed and sensitive.
- If you are shorter or taller than the person you are talking to, increase the distance between you by taking a step backwards so that you do not speak the “upwards” or “downwards”, thus departing from your “I”.

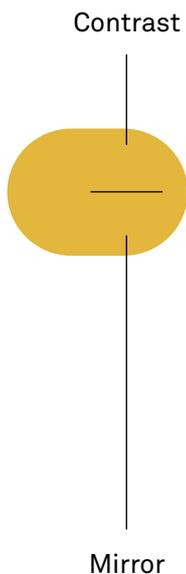


Fader 4

Effect:
**Formal
Tone**

What Contrast looks like:

- Nose to nose so the parties are positioned directly opposite each other
- Different height: e.g. sitting/standing
- Different posture and gestures



Effect:
**Positive
Chemistry**

What Mirror looks like:

- Shoulder to shoulder so that the parties are looking in the same direction
- Same height: e.g. sitting/sitting, standing/standing
- Same posture: e.g. hands in the lap

Fader 4 regulates the chemistry using Mirror and Contrast

Effect

Mirror and Contrast regulate the chemistry between you and your participants. If you turn up the Mirror volume, for example by positioning yourself alongside the participants, you will get on the same wavelength more quickly. When we mirror, we achieve equivalence, and we can communicate on equal terms. When we contrast one another's body language (for example by positioning ourselves directly opposite each other), the interaction becomes more formal. It creates a distance, and we enter into a more professional mode. Contrast can be an effective strategy for striking up a formal tone – for example after a pause.

How to do it:

1. Shoulder to shoulder or nose to nose

The most effective way of mirroring is to reflect the direction in which the other person is looking. When people are looking in the same direction, they have a view of the same thing, and when people are looking in the same direction, they can also start to think in the same way. You mirror direction by placing yourself shoulder to shoulder with the person or persons you are communicating with. You contrast the relationship by looking in opposite directions. You do this by standing nose to nose.

Shoulder-to-shoulder positions encourage:

- Small talk
- Personal discussions
- Exchange of ideas
- Give and take

Nose-to-nose positions encourage:

- Lectures
- Lines of reasoning
- Speeches for the defence
- Negotiations

2. At eye level or not at eye level

Another way of mirroring or contrasting is to adopt a position to mirror or contrast eye level. If your participants are sitting down, you can also sit down, thus creating better chemistry because you are at eye level. It is much more pleasant to be spoken to at the same eye level than from above or below.

3. Copy the other person's posture

Finally, you can mirror or contrast the other person's posture. You mirror by copying the way the other person "has their hands in their lap", "crosses their legs" or "leans against a wall". It creates harmony between you, and you will feel that you are quickly getting on the same wavelength. You contrast by doing the opposite of what the other person is doing. If he/she is sitting in a relaxed position, sitting upright will enable you to maintain a formal tone.

Tips and tricks for creating positive chemistry:

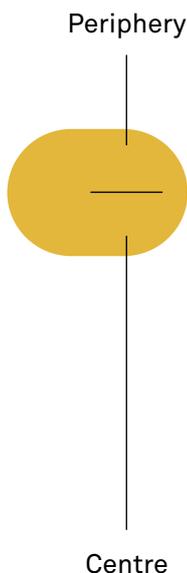
- Conduct staff development interviews around the corner of a table so that one person is sitting on the long side and the other person is sitting at the end of the table. This will bring you both closer to the "shoulder-to-shoulder" position.
- When you speak, position yourself alongside the person you are speaking to so that you are looking in the same direction.
- Avoid addressing someone from behind.
- Do not start communication until you are both in the same social space.

Fader 5

Effect:
Anonymous
Make room for other people

What Periphery looks like:

- Position at the outer edge of the empty space
- Position close to walls or furniture
- Peripheral position in relation to audience



Effect:
Empowerment
Leadership

What Centre looks like:

- Central position in the empty space
- Surrounded by as much empty space as possible
- Maximum visibility
- Central position in relation to the audience's gestures

Fader 5 regulates empowerment using Centring and Periphery

Effect

If you want to make the most of your empowerment, make sure to have air and empty space around you. When you are surrounded by emptiness, you expand your territory. The empty space empowers you. If, on the other hand, you position yourself between a table and a screen, you will be surrounded by objects, and this will reduce your power. Objects cover you up, and you come across as less powerful.

Centring gives you punch. It gives off signals of leadership and creates the feeling that there is substance behind your words. Periphery makes you anonymous. When you position yourself at the edge of the space, you make room for other people. The other people become the ones with the focus and power. As a facilitator, you can alternate consciously between Centring and Periphery. You should present points and objectives and get things going from central positions. In terms of facilitating input, it is best to adopt a peripheral position, because this draws attention to the opinions of the participants.

How to do it:

You centre yourself by positioning yourself in the centre of the empty space in the room. The empty space in the room is that area available to you alone, where there are no chairs, tables, bags or anything. The more you are surrounded by empty space, the more power you will get from the room. So always take a good look at the space and be aware of the empty space and the centre of that empty space. Reorganise furniture and move things in order to surround your position in the room with as much empty space as possible. You can even use masking tape to mark out the central point of the space so that you can consciously position yourself in the very place you wish to be and make your points with a high level of empowerment.

You place yourself peripherally by positioning yourself up against the wall, the door, the screen or furniture. You can also achieve a peripheral position at the outer edge of the empty space in the room. A peripheral position gives you less focus. So, it is a good idea to use Periphery to shift the focus on to other people. If you want to play a silent role, position yourself peripherally in relation to the people in question, thus giving them the central position. The peripheral position is great for facilitating input from participants.

Tips and tricks for getting more power from space:

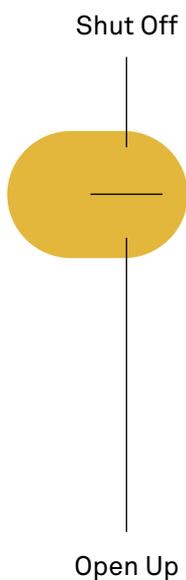
- Sit in a space that gives you maximum visibility. Ask for office space with the best visibility – preferably where you can see the entrance – and you will remain in the power spot of the space.
- Mark out your space (e.g. with a round carpet), and you will achieve more power.
- Touch surfaces. Tabletops and the surfaces of walls can increase your power, while contact with points reduces your power.

Fader 6

**Effect:
Excluding**

What Shut Off looks like:

- The solar plexus is turned away from the people you are speaking to
- Lower body is pointing away
- The solar plexus is obstructed
- You use only your torso when you shift focus



**Effect:
Inclusive**

What Open Up looks like:

- The solar plexus is turned in the direction of the people you are speaking to
- The solar plexus is unobstructed
- Active lower body so that you turn your whole body when you shift focus

Fader 6 regulates the experience of inclusion using Open Up and Shut Off

Effect

Our task as facilitators is to ensure that everyone feels included in the process. Our participants should feel seen and heard, sensing that they are playing a major role in the process. We can do this by using Open Up and Shut Off. When we turn up the Open Up volume, we make our participants feel included and acknowledged. When we turn up the Shut Off volume, we make our participants feel excluded and out of focus.

This fader enables us, WITHOUT having to express it in words, to adjust the balance, so that silent voices open up, while the strong voices hold back.

How to do it:

As a facilitator, you could think of yourself as a spotlight. The people you physically open yourself up to are the people you illuminate. They get attention and room to take space and grow. Meanwhile, you leave the people you physically shut off in the dark. They do not get attention and will feel that they have to tone themselves down a little. It is often possible to open up to all groups and individuals from the same position. So, when you are facilitating, you should move around in the space, because then you can include all groups and individuals.

You open up by turning your solar plexus (the area beneath the sternum) towards the group or the individual you want to make feel included. Establish eye contact, preferably adding a smile and nod of acknowledgement. Make sure that you are not holding a piece of A4 paper or another item in front of your solar plexus, thus obstructing contact with the people you wish to include.

You shut off groups and individuals by turning away from them so that you do not have to talk with a twisted torso in order to establish contact. Your body will give off the signal that you are moving away. This is an effective way of letting people know that they should now finish so we can proceed to something else.

We have noticed that facilitators seldom make active use of their lower body. They make do with turning their torso when they want to shift the focus among the people they are speaking to. You achieve a more inclusive effect by making active use of your lower body, turning your feet and legs when you want to shift focus.

Tips and tricks for subduing the dominant voices and encouraging the silent ones:

- Position yourself at an angle behind the speaker you wish to shut off. Maybe lean a fraction over the person's desk space so that you "illuminate" the others, establishing eye contact with the people you want to encourage to speak.
- Position yourself at a 90-degree angle in relation to the people you are encouraging to talk and extend the duration of your eye contact with them.

Conclusion: Get some feedback

We do not always realise ourselves just how much space our habits, stature and position take up in relationships. So, it is necessary to get some feedback.

We only know what signals we are giving off when we hear other people telling us.

The practice and feedback we recommend, and what this article sets out to contribute to, is to try out the Mixer's faders one at a time at different volumes and then get feedback on the effect they have on other people. Only then will you know, for example, how much **you in particular** need to push the space or how centrally you need to position yourself in order to achieve the desired effect. The more aware you become of the effect of your own signals, the better you will develop your interactive skills.

In our experience, body language training provides a short cut to positive interaction: simply because when you activate your non-verbal skills, you achieve an effect more quickly. The American acting coach Sanford Meisner once said: "An ounce of behavior is worth a pound of words." We believe he was right. It takes many minutes (if not hours) of verbal exchanges to create the same level of mutual understanding that you can create in a matter of seconds with the conscious use of body language. It frees up time, energy and composure. You can then invest these in the actual core task.

Notes:

¹In 1898, Constantin Stanislavski, the father of acting technique, invented the term "subtext", which he defined as: "The power of the human spirit, which clearly, yet invisibly follows the words of the text." In acting technique, the term "subtext" became a crucial turning point in terms of working with acting as an art of interaction rather than an art of declamation. The concept of subtext marked the start of the next 115 years of investigation into how an actor on the stage manages to portray all the psychological and physical aspects of a relationship that verbal language does not express.

²Lene has worked with the acting techniques of Constantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, the dance theoretician Rudolf Laban, the French master of mime Jacques Lecoq, the improvisation expert Keith Johnstone and the theatre director Anne Bogart, who is still alive today. Anyone wishing to learn more about these acting techniques can consult the book "The Actor at Work" by Lene Kobbernagel, Forlaget Frydenlund, 2009.

About Lene Kobbernagel

Lene is an expert in body language. She works closely together with Implement's facilitation experts to deliver body language training as part of Implement's facilitation training programmes. In addition, Lene runs the company Samtalekunst (The Art of Conversation). As a consultant, she deploys body language and stories to strengthen communication in organisations. www.samtalekunst.dk

This article as well as the tools presented were conceptualised and written with substantial help from Henrik Horn Andersen, partner at Implement Consulting Group.



Appendix 1 – Feedback Using The Mixer

	Notice	Detection Note your detections	Effect Note the effect it has on you	Suggestion for practice
Energy Physical dimension	<p>Dwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of pauses The duration of pauses Prolonged eye contact <p>Flicker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No pauses Brief eye contact 	<p>Example: I detect that your gaze wanders when you are making a presentation.</p>	<p>Example: It has an ambiguous effect on me.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise Dwell.</p>
Energy Relational dimension	<p>Push</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaning forward and in the direction of the people speaking Weight on the front foot The energy is crushing <p>Pull</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaning back and away from the people you are talking to Weight is on the outside of the feet Pulling one shoulder back 	<p>Example: I detect that you lean back as soon as you have presented your arguments.</p>	<p>Example: It leaves me with a feeling that you do not fully stand for what you are saying.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise Push.</p>
Body Physical dimension	<p>The I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head, stomach and body are in a straight, vertical line Weight distributed equally on both legs – hips balanced Long neck <p>The S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head, stomach and body in S shape Tilted head, neck revealed Weight on one hip 	<p>Example: I detect that you tilt your head.</p>	<p>Example: I feel that you do not entirely believe what you say.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise the I.</p>
Body Relational dimension	<p>Mirror</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoulder to shoulder so that you are looking in the same direction Same eye level, e.g. sitting/sitting or standing/standing Same posture, e.g. hands in the lap <p>Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nose to nose so that you are positioned directly opposite each other Different eye level, e.g. sitting/standing Various postures 	<p>Example: I detect that you were standing nose to nose when you gave feedback.</p>	<p>Example: That meant that you came over as pedantic to me.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise Mirror.</p>

<p>Space Physical dimension</p>	<p>Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central position in the empty space in the room • Surrounded by as much empty space as possible • Maximum visibility <p>Periphery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position at the outer edge of the empty space • Position close to walls, furniture or other objects • Peripheral position in relation to audience 	<p>Example: I notice that there is a large desk between you and the PowerPoint presentation and three chairs around you. So, you disappear behind furniture.</p>	<p>Example: It makes a messy impression and takes the attention away from your words.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise Centring.</p>
<p>Space Relational dimension</p>	<p>Open Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your solar plexus in the direction of the people you are speaking to • The solar plexus is unobstructed • Active lower body so that you turn your whole body when you shift focus <p>Shut Off</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solar plexus does not point directly towards the people you are speaking to • The solar plexus is obstructed by notes in your hand • Lower body is still – only the torso turns 	<p>Example: 80% of the time, your body turns in this direction, while you only turn towards this part of the group on a few occasions.</p>	<p>Example: It leaves me with the impression that you are not including everyone equally in the process.</p>	<p>Example: It would be a good idea to practise Open Up.</p>

Download the practice guide on www.samtalekunst.dk

FAST FACTS ABOUT IMPLEMENT

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 Offices: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Stockholm, Malmo, Oslo, Zurich and Munich
implementconsultinggroup.com