Virtual Learning Center – Key Takeaways

Digital Body Language

1. Remember – while three fourths of face to face communication is body language – 70% of team communication is virtual.
2. What digital body language signals are you sending in your messages? Signals like the following:
   a. Word choice
   b. Response time to a message
   c. Email signature
   d. Who is copied, including blind copied, on emails
   e. Who is the message forwarded to
   f. Order of recipients on the email
   g. Switching from one medium to another
   h. Use of punctuation, abbreviations, emojis, etc.
3. Consider how digital body language signals may be received by others.
4. Ask the following questions to understand and use digital body language signals more effectively:
   a. Is enough context given?
   b. Is it clear what is meant?
   c. Is the right emotional tone being used?
   d. How might punctuation be used to show emotion in the right way?
   e. Is a clear call to action given?
5. A key skill when using digital body language is to never confuse a brief message with a clear message. Brevity can cause anxiety when there may not be need to worry.
6. For managers, ask these questions to create a culture of clarity instead of brevity:
   a. Is it clear what is needed?
   b. Are the right people being included?
   c. Is it clear what is expected and when the response is due?
7. Learning to remember the human first before focusing on the task is the crux of digital grace.
8. In digital communication, assume positive intentions first and confirm your interpretation was correct before responding. Give others the benefit of the doubt.
9. Here are two ways to show positive intent in difficult situations:
   a. Think about how the conversation can be shifted, for example, from a text or email to a phone call or live meeting.
   b. Have an open-ended discussion with the other person. Be curious. Usually, a curious, non-threatening tone gives others a way to share authentically.
10. Practice patience and thoughtful, careful responses and don’t forget to proofread. Remember: Less haste leads to quicker understanding and trust building.
11. Here are two tips on how to respond carefully to your messages:
   a. Read and reread your responses.
   b. Schedule your communication for the optimal time for engagement.
12. When considering the right channel for your communications, consider length, complexity, familiarity, and discipline.
13. Develop digital communication habits that illustrate empathy for others including a healthy respect for the other person’s time and regard for their privacy.
14. The four most effective digital body language signals to communicate feelings are exclamation points, periods, question marks, and emojis.
15. Exclamation points have three meanings. Urgency, excitement or shouting.
16. Now periods can signal anger and even fury unlike any other punctuation tool.
17. Today, question marks can signal interrogation, interest or anger. A question mark by itself is also powerful. In just one keystroke, the question mark pushes for clarification.
18. Emojis are one of the most powerful cues of tone in our voice today. Thanks a lot, smiley face will come across as much more sincere and genuine than thanks a lot, angry face coming off as frustrated.
19. When managing power dynamics, there are two questions that weigh in at varying levels of importance in messages being relayed:
   a. Who has more or less power in the relationship?
   b. How much do we trust each other?
20. The instructor shared a Power and Trust Matrix, which can guide what digital body language signals should be used in different situations to improve communication. In sum, the y-axis (horizontal) shows who has more power and the x-axis (vertical) shows how close or far the participants are in trust levels.
   a. Falling in the up/close quadrant means an individual has more power and close trust with someone they are messaging. Thus, it may be common for that individual to use brevity in their communication.
   b. Placement in the down/far category means an individual has less power and low trust with someone, and therefore, may prioritize longer explanations. Focus on quick responsiveness and prioritize thoughtfulness to build brand and credibility.
   c. Being in the up/far category means an individual has higher power and low trust. Thus, it's important to show people why they are appreciated too.
   d. Positioned in the down/close category means an individual has lower power and high trust, being responsive and clear is important. If a recipient doesn't answer posed questions by email, a quick follow-up is more likely.
21. In conclusion, here are six key rules to become a master digital communicator:
   a. Understand power dynamics. Be conscious of the power dynamics in the situation and trust levels of the audience.
   b. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Avoid automatically jumping to a negative reaction, and ask what the likely positive intent of the message is.
   c. Ask for clarity. Is the message missing information, such as a deadline for the response?
   d. Use the right channel and communicate your feelings. Remember, each channel language that you use implies different priorities and levels of importance.
   e. Learn from your responses over time. If you receive a difficult response to your message, review your communication, and try to see the impact from the other person’s perspective.
   f. Create digital body language norms on your team.
22. Check out the Take Charge of Your Communication worksheet in the Exercise Files for this course and consider putting these rules into practice on your teams.