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by Carol Kinsey Goman

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In the future, a leader who believes that what he says carries more weight than anything he does will be asked to step down from his position. The most successful leader will be the one whose policies, actions, behaviors, and body language are strategically aligned with his verbal messages.

From my book, *The Silent Language of Leaders: How Body Language Can Help or Hurt How You Lead*, here are three predictions that link the future of effective leadership with nonverbal communication:

1. The visual technology revolution will make body language skills even more crucial than they are today. Leaders always have been under scrutiny, but with future developments in visual technology, a leader's body language will be even more exposed to evaluation. For example: There is no doubt that videoconferencing—especially with products like Cisco's Telepresence, which allows participants to see and be seen as life-size images—can help to build stronger bonds and improve rapport. But video communication also can heighten participants' anxiety and self-consciousness because there is no hiding behind a text message or computer screen. Leaders will need to develop their nonverbal skills to make the most of these tools.
2. The body language of effective leaders will become increasingly "warm." There are two sets of body language cues that followers look for in leaders. One set projects warmth and empathy and the other signals power and status. Both are necessary for leaders today, and both will be critical to the success of leaders in the future. If your organization is headed toward a collaborative structure and philosophy, then effective leadership becomes less about projecting power and more about building relationships. And relationship-building, in turn, is all about the body language of trust, inclusion, and empathy. So the "soft side" of nonverbal communication (which has been undervalued and underutilized by leaders more concerned with projecting strength, status, and authority) will become central to achieving business goals.
3. Authenticity will be increasingly revealed through body language. Warren Bennis, one of the most prominent authorities on organizational development and leadership, was speaking at a conference I attended. An audience member asked if Bennis ever made the following statement: "Leadership is 85 percent character." Bennis paused and answered, "Probably. But I'd change that now. Leadership is 100% character."

Body language reveals character. No leader, regardless of how skilled a nonverbal communicator she is, can fool the people who work with her over an extended period of time. Sooner or later your body will give you away. Like good manners and good grammar, body language is a tool for expressing your "best" self in a certain situation. And it is a highly valuable tool. It just can't hide your character.

You can become aware of and change ineffective body language habits, you can develop a deeper understanding of the impact that certain nonverbal behaviors have on your audiences, and you can add more effective gestures, postures, and expressions to your leadership repertoire. But the most charismatic, influential, and powerful body language always will be that which is totally congruent with who you are, what you stand for, and what you truly believe.