Non-verbal Behavior Customs Training Increases Security and Decreases Black Market Activity

Provided by Sentir Global Inc.

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Threat Recognition

Studies indicate that as little as 10% of the message we give is verbal, while 90% is non-verbal – Ray Birdwistle

Other academic studies have proven that between 60-75% of communication is non-verbal
Question?

How much did you miss in the 1 minute and 47 seconds of the video just played?

Now consider a Customs Officer on a shift for 2-3 hours or longer!
So how much of that communication are Customs and Border Security officers missing?
Goal of the Customs Process

If the goal is to increase international commerce, foreign investment and decrease transnational crime, then **Security** is the key to attaining such a goal.
Security Response

Governments around the globe rely on a host of high tech and very expensive computers, cameras and other equipment to detect and deter smuggling.
International Organizations play a Critical Role

Challenge - To develop a new breed of Customs and Border Security officers that can detect much of the illegal activity before it actually occurs and then stop them in progress.
Prevent criminal activity before it happens
Operating in the realm “Left of Boom”
Psychology and Pattern Recognition

The most powerful pattern recognition and pattern analysis tool is the human brain – so the customs officer training should leverage that exceptional ability.
Women vs. Men

• Women actually have 24 receptors in their brain tied to body language recognition.

• Men only have 8

• How can we take advantage of that biological difference to increase the ability to detect possible threatening non-verbal behaviors?
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior

Biometrics

Atmospherics

Proxemics

Kinesics

Micro-facial expressions
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior

Biometrics

For our purposes, biometrics refers to the group of autonomic functions, or involuntary changes within the body that a person cannot control such as pupil dilation, blink rate or reddening of the face or sweating.
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior - Biometrics

• The normal blink rate for individuals is 15-20 blinks per minute – once every 3 seconds

• Changes from this baseline is indicative of cognitive processing- possibly an inner struggle or perceived threat

• Blink rate often increases with lying.
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior - Biometrics

• Use caution in evaluating increase in baseline blink rate since anxiety while talking to the authorities may be misinterpreted as lying

• Always evaluate behavioral changes in context of the situation
Biometrics

• Vocal tension, throat tightness and throat clearing are highly responsive to stimuli from the emotional brain and amygdala – generally induced by anxiety.

• These are all autonomic responses the person cannot hide.
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior

**Proxemics**

According to Edward T. Hall, proxemics is “the study of humankind’s perception and use of space,” and is the interpretation of the spatial distance we maintain as we interact with others, depending upon the social and cultural context.
Proxemics

Four different levels of space are defined as:

- **Intimate Space**
- **Personal Space**
- **Social Space**
- **Public Space**
Proxemic Separation
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior - Proximity

• Powerful limbic response is experienced when people violate our personal space

• When humans feel discomfort about a person or situation, the limbic portion of the brain responds with autonomic negative signals – then it’s up to the officer to recognize those behaviors in context.
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior

*Kinesics*

A means of communication through gestures that reflect feelings, attitudes and intentions. By observing closely, humans elicit information which may provide an indication of their thoughts or reactions to a specific situation and may telegraph threatening movements or deceptive behavior.
Kinesics - Look for Anomalies
Human Domains of Non-verbal Behavior

Atmospherics

Collective mood or atmosphere of a given environment: how it sounds, feels or smells during normal activity. The key is to establish a “Baseline” of normal activity such as times of arrival in airport or traffic patterns at border crossing.
Atmospherics – Look for Anomalies
Atmospherics

• Every environment has a baseline of activity from which all activity is measured.

• Know what those baseline are in each location so you can more easily detect anomalies.
Atmospherics
Atmospherics

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Atmospherics

• What is “added to” the baseline that might be a danger or change the dynamics of the environment?

• What is “missing” from the baseline that might indicate an impending event?
Atmospherics
Awareness of Cultural Differences
Threat Recognition

- Forcing the Transnational criminal to feel uncomfortable forces more body language “Leakage” for you to decipher.

- Recognizing these cues can keep you Left of Boom much of the time or at least anticipate the responses.
Detecting Emotions on the Street or at a Border Crossing

How can you tell the emotional state of someone you see that is smoking?

Whether they have something to hide or are feeling angry?
Kinesics of a Conversation

Who is in charge of the conversation?

How can you tell?

Who is the leader of a group talking?

Who disagrees with them?
Non-Verbal Behavior

Our body changes our minds
Our minds change our behavior
Our behaviors change our outcome

Amy Cuddy
Threat Assessment

• An officer must quickly develop the ability to read a situation to perceive and interpret non-verbal behavior.

• Rolland Ouellette – It’s easier for people to lie with their words than with their body, but you must be able to read that language as well.
So what is the face of growing anger and what are the cues the customs officer should look for?
Criminals Non-verbal Signals

• Sweating palms is a response to anxiety, stress or fear: excretion of the eccrine-gland moisture (Sweat) to the hands – so look for someone drying their palms on pant legs or shirt.

• Anxiety – often displayed by sweat in skin above upper lip.
Non-verbal Signals

- Facial flushing is caused by sudden arousal of the sympathetic nervous system, which dilates small blood vessels of the face and body – another indication of anxiety, anger or embarrassment.
Criminals Non-verbal Signals

“Body movements are harder to edit than words, the tongue makes a better liar”.

David Givens, PhD
"Hands are such incredibly gifted communicators that they bear watching, especially in matters of truth and falsehood" – David Givens, PhD.

Hands read Braille, speak sign language and write poetry – so connected are the hands to the central nervous system that deceivers are often unable to keep them still.
Non-verbal Signals

• In isolation, no non-verbal behavior indicates a lie, but in context with other actions, a picture emerges.

• Paralinguistic studies have demonstrated that vocal pauses, hems or throat clearing carry meaningful information about unsaid, veiled or hidden feelings.
Non-verbal Signals

• Emotions are mammalian extensions of vertebrate arousal patterns where neurochemicals (dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin) are raised/lowered as a result of the brain’s activity level.

• Because of this activity level, we can read the emotional states and monitor changes to stimuli.
Body Language – The Face

• There are over 40 separate muscles in the face, the most expressive portion of the body.

• The mouth and eyes are the most important in distinguishing negative non-verbal behavior.

• Frowns, sneers, snarls and even pursed lips are indications of aggression.

• Squints and stares are definitely aggressive and demonstrate a feeling of superiority may indicate immediate attack.
Body Language – The Face
Body Language – The Face

• Inward roll of the lip – anxiety indicator and effort to stifle growing anger

• Hands and face tend to mirror each other, so if anger is shown in face, hands will also be showing tension.

• If the forehead is contracted, the smile is insincere. The muscles around the eye cannot contract simultaneously with the forehead contracted.
Body Language – The Face

• Narrowing of the lips are signs of anxiety and anger.
• Remember to look for multiple indicators or clusters.
• Context and relevance keys to putting meaning to any non-verbal behavior.
Non-verbal Signals

Humans around the world speak literally thousands of different languages, yet all humans communicate with universal Body Language.

The Customs and Border Security Officer must understand that language as well.
Conclusion

• How do we all develop a new breed of Customs and Border Security officers that can detect much of the illegal activity before it actually occurs and then stop it in progress.

• How can we leverage the exceptional ability of women to detect threat signals in the Customs Arena?
The Role of International Organizations
Thank You