

Digital Body Language

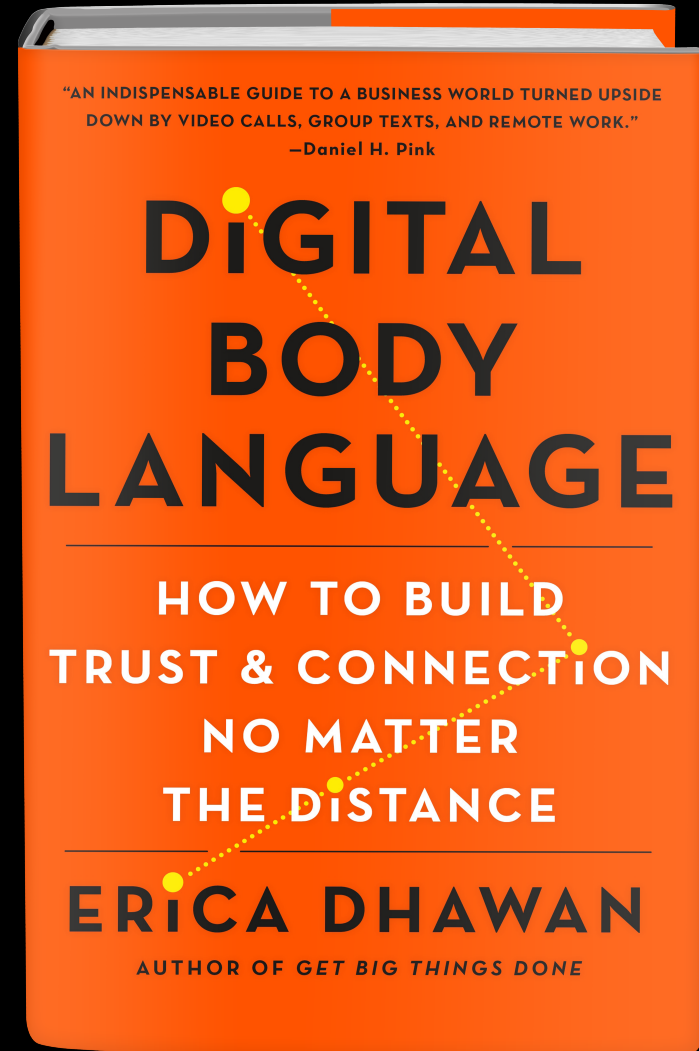
Erica Dhawan

ericadhawan.com

CEO, Cotential

erica@cotentialgroup.com

[@ericadhawan](https://twitter.com/ericadhawan)



Sarah

Quick thought –what do you think of this idea for the deliverable?

4:00 P.M.

John

How would this fit in? doesn't seem like you thought this through..

8:00 P.M.

Sarah

New subject title from “Quick thought” to “Deliverable Changes” — lengthy email

10:35 P.M.

John

... some more questions.

10:45 P.M.



Sarah

I have a great idea!

John

I don't understand what she means by this, I need more context...

Sarah

Replies with a structured email — 200 words, 6 bullet points, bold and underlined headings.

John

This is pretty great.



The **next** day...

Sarah

Can we chat about this before our team meeting tomorrow?

6:00 A.M.

John

can you send your thoughts in writing?

6:10 A.M.

Sarah

!!!!

John

I would love to better understand this.

A 15 minute exchange took
5 hours of time, stress, and fear
over a 12 hour period.





3/4

of face-to-face
collaboration is non-
verbal

collaboration in
teams is virtual

70%

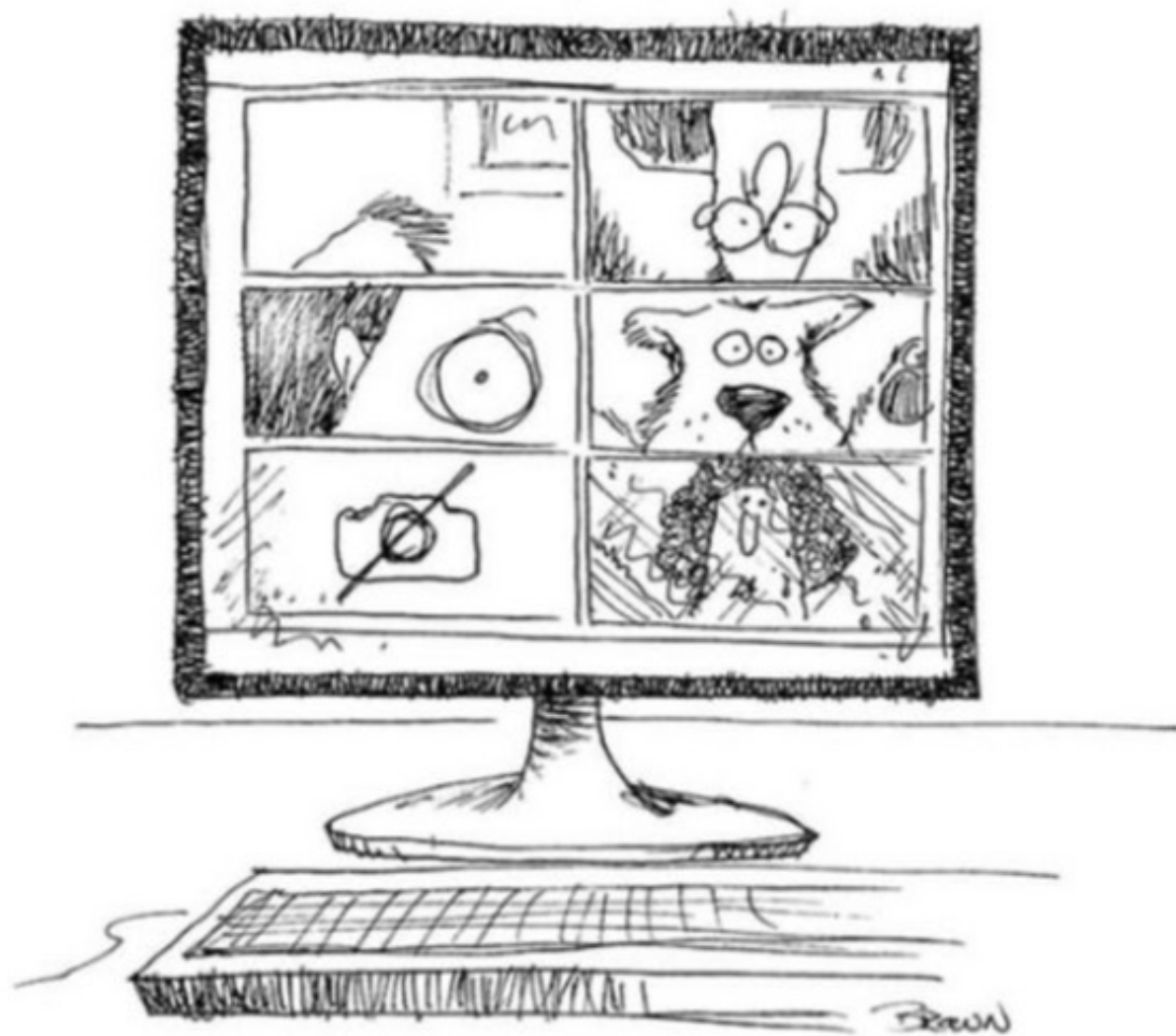


CORRECTION!!!



100%

collaboration in
teams is virtual



The new reality of meetings.



"Hey, can I call you right back in two weeks?"







"All in favor, look up from your cell phones."

We need
**to reimagine
collaboration
and inclusion...**

- We misunderstand quickly
- Speak freely
- Argue more
- Walk away faster

Digital Communication Pain Points

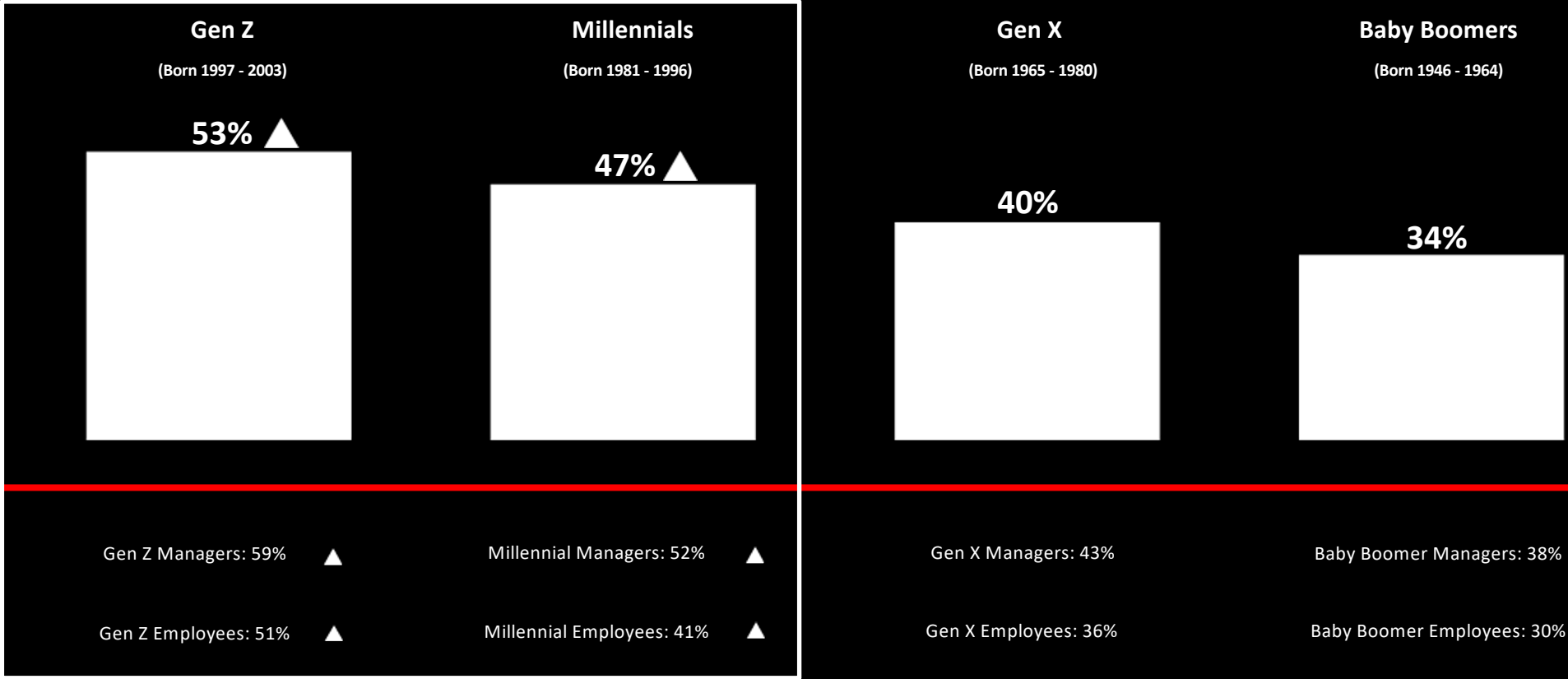
In our recent study with Quester, a lack of communication was identified as the biggest issue affecting teams

-  **70%** | Percent of employees experienced some form of **poor digital communication**
-  **75%** | Percent of employees identify a **lack of communication** as a key pain point in digital communication, making it the leading cause of poor collaboration
-  **4 Hrs** | **Time lost weekly** because of poor communication
-  **Managers** in particular are **more likely to encounter poor communication** than their employee counterparts

Digital Communication Anxiety

In our recent study with Quester, we found that Gen Zs and Millennials are digital natives but they have the highest levels of Digital Anxiety

Digital Communication Anxiety Across Generations (% of Respondents)



▲ Arrow denotes that the group is significantly higher than Gen X or Baby Boomers

Digital Body Language

the cues and signals we send in digital communication that clarify subtext of our messages

Choice of
communication
medium

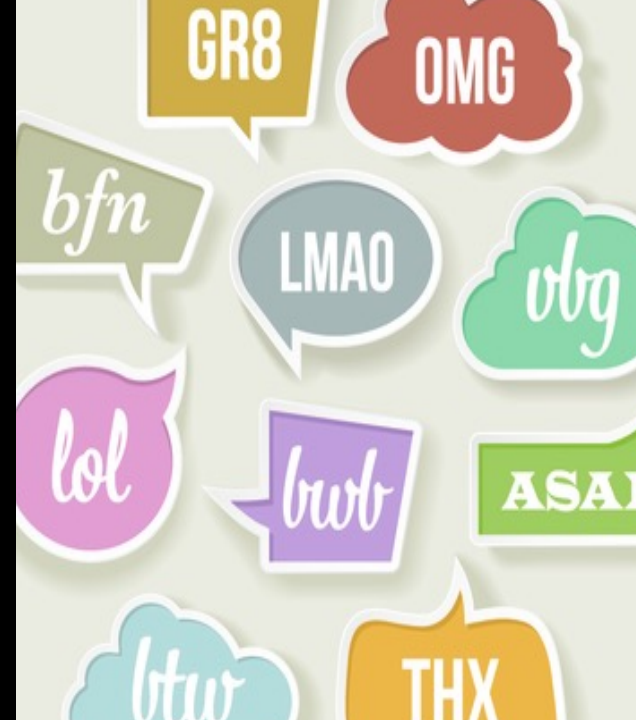
To: jen@email.com v tom@
Cc: mark@email.com v
Bcc: susan@email.com v
Subject: Last week's report
From: Carla Zeti... Signa

Word choice

1. Thanks
2. Regards
3. Cheers
4. Best regards
5. Thanks in advance
6. Thank you
7. Best
8. Kind regards



CC; BCC;
FWD; RE

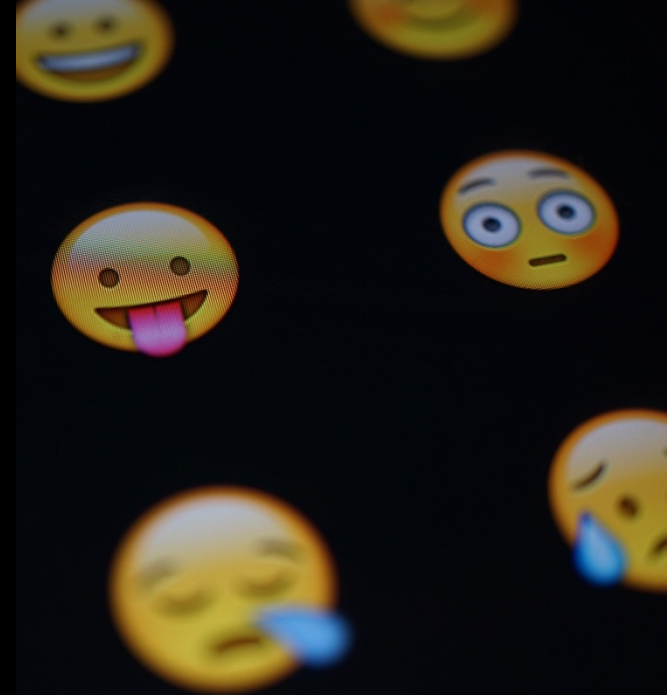


Response
time

Video
meetings



Meeting
times



Use of
punctuation



Use of
emojis

Think about...

What has been your top benefit in digital work?

What has been your top challenge in digital work?

4 Laws of Digital Body Language



**VALUE
VISIBLY**



**COMMUNICATE
CAREFULLY**



**COLLABORATE
CONFIDENTLY**



TRUST TOTALLY

VALUE VISIBLY

“Sorry, I need to reschedule”

sent 5 minutes before your scheduled start time

“I’m double booked”

sent an hour before start time

“ ”

a no-show with no notice at all

“I don’t know why we’re even meeting.”

only after you sent the agenda a week before



VALUE VISIBLY

Watch the clock

Acknowledge individual differences

Practice radical recognition

Introverts VS Extroverts

- Open lines of communication outside of meetings.
- Clear agendas that allow for preparation.
- Don't interrupt their speaking.
- Downtime in between meetings.

- Regular face-to-face and video meetings.
- Manage airtime.
- Use breakout groups or pre-meeting brainstorm teams.
- Designate a meeting moderator and require (virtual) hand raising.

Digital Natives VS Digital Adapters

- Preference for informal mediums like text and IM.
- Voicemail phobia.
- Consistent use of each channel.
- More frequent, shorter messages.

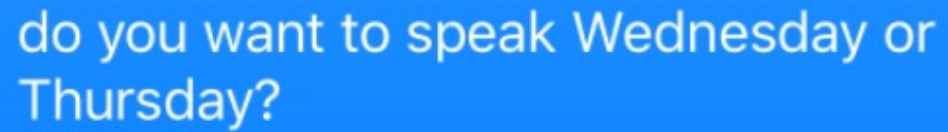
- Preference for phone calls and in-person meetings.
- Reluctance with new technology.
- Inconsistent use of each channel (e.g., using text like its email).
- Higher quality, less frequent messages.

Masculine VS Feminine (not gender)

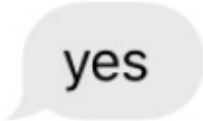
- Equally confident in digital and face-to-face relationship building.
- More likely to skip proofreading in favor of faster response time.
- Messages are short and to the point, without niceties or emotive punctuation.
- Uses assertive & definitive boosters such as “definitely” “100% confident” or “obviously”

- Preference for face-to-face relationship building.
- More likely to spend time on niceties in emails, video chat, and phone calls.
- Thoughtful, proofread messages with longer response times.
- Intensive adverbs, non-standard spelling, and emotive punctuation. (“sooooo” or “yes!!”)

COMMUNICATE CAREFULLY



do you want to speak Wednesday or
Thursday?



yes



COMMUNICATE CAREFULLY

Think before you type

Deliver with maniacal clarity

Choose the right channel

COLLABORATE CONFIDENTLY

**I need this report
by the end of the
week.**

**(but I'll force you
to rework it for
the next two
months)**

**I'll get back to
you soon.**

**(or in 2 weeks,
with half an
answer)**

**I need this by
tomorrow
morning.**

**(even though I'm
sending this
request at 10pm)**

COLLABORATE CONFIDENTLY



Inform the right people at the right time

Prioritize and stay on track


Pay attention to details

Collaboration Tool Guidelines

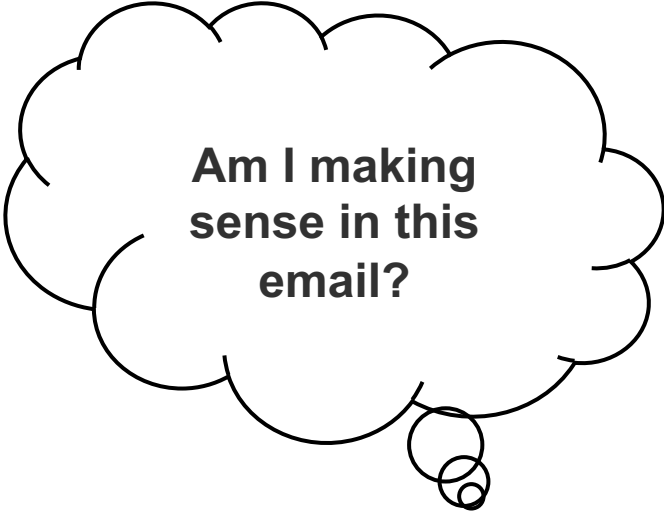
Define expectations for each tool.

| Tool | When to Use | Response Time | Norms (how to use and how not to use) |
|--|--|--|---|
| Instant Message (IM) | Time sensitive, urgent messaging Short and simple conversations | ASAP If showing available (green), otherwise response may be slower | Use with less than 6 people (otherwise call). Always set your own availability. Avoid using with complicated questions or conversations that require visuals. |
| Outlook (email) | Provide directional, important and timely information Ensure there's a record of your communication Direct the receiver to an online source for more information | <24hrs; Priority dependent | Use identifiers in subject line for urgency & response expectation Use to share attachments Avoid when immediate response is required or if its random chit-chat |
| Hangouts / Zoom / Phone (call /meeting) | Use for all calls/meetings including virtual and external meetings | Immediate or long-term | Ensure appropriate usage of Camera & Mic Use "mute" when needed Ensure meeting host clarifies if video functionality is required in participation Record calls for those who miss them |
| Individual/ Group Text | Time sensitive/urgent communications and you were unable to reach via | Urgent <0.1 hrs – Priority depending | Tool used if it is preferred communication for leader or if you unable to reach in other forms Avoid texting during meetings/working sessions |

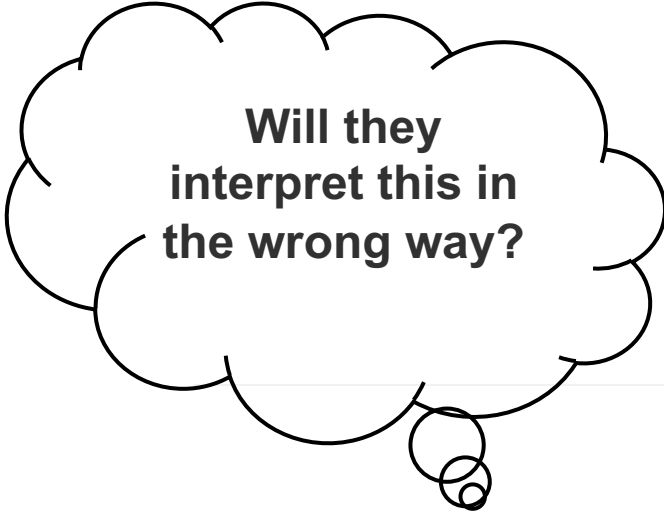
TRUST TOTALLY



**Does the silence
on the phone call
have something
to do with *me*?**

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and a small tail at the bottom.

**Am I making
sense in this
email?**

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and a small tail at the bottom.

**Will they
interpret this in
the wrong way?**

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and a small tail at the bottom.



TRUST TOTALLY

Give the benefit of the doubt

Create virtual water cooler moments

Show vulnerabilities

Getting practical

Get the FREE Guide: Master Your Digital Body Language

<https://ericadhawan.com/dbl>

Hybrid Work Checklist

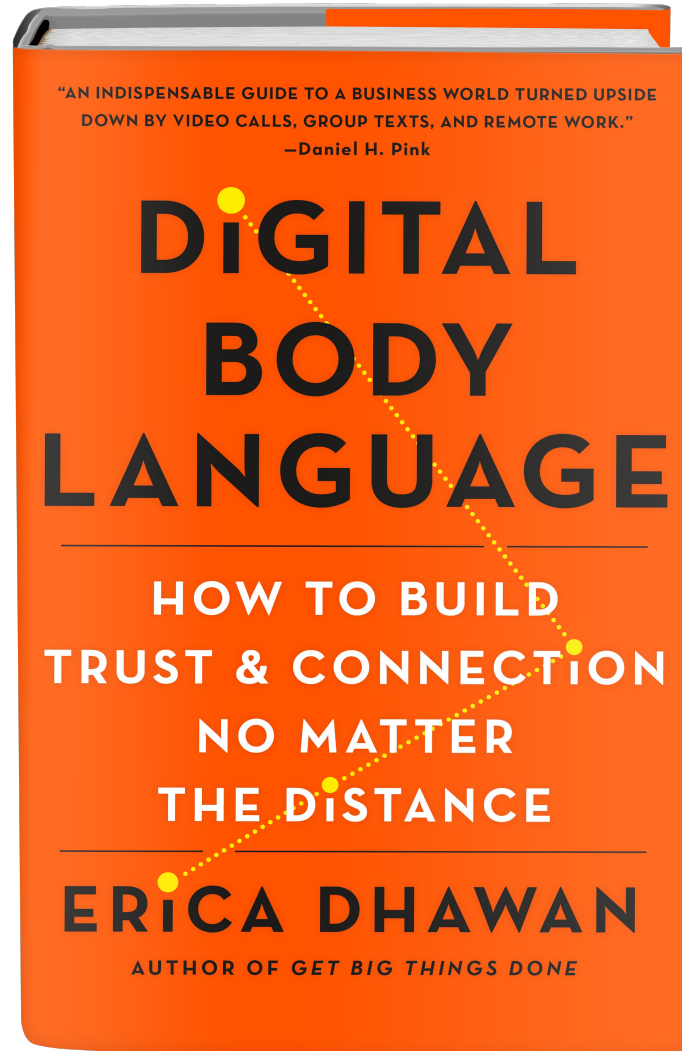
| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Value Visibly | Do we feel like our time is respected? Do we feel like our best work is acknowledged and celebrated? Do we feel comfortable voicing concerns? |
| Communicate Carefully | Do we feel there is a common understanding of priorities and next steps? Do we have a clear understanding of which channels to use and when? Do we have clear language and word choice to foster understanding? |
| Collaborate Confidently | Do all the appropriate stakeholders feel identified and aligned? Do we feel that the correct people are informed--and are they cascading the messages appropriately? Do we feel there is consistency in communications across teams? |
| Trust Totally | Do we give each other the benefit of the doubt when facing uncertainty? Do we show vulnerability? Do we create moments for informal social connections? |

Your commitments

What is one action you can take to:

- Value Visibly
- Communicate Carefully
- Collaborate Confidently
- Trust Totally

The new book



Digital Body Language certification course

dblcourse.com

Resources

- Reach out at erica@cotentialgroup.com
- Book: dblbook.com
- Course: dblcourse.com



How will you thrive in hybrid work
for all those counting on your wisdom,
creativity and heart?

Thank you

Erica Dhawan

ericadhawan.com

CEO, Cotential

erica@cotentialgroup.com