



TriMetrix®HD Sense of Timing

Sense of Timing

The ability to accurately evaluate what is happening in such a way that statements, decisions, and actions are the most effective, accurate, and timely.

Why is this skill important?

A person who has a good Sense of Timing will be able to effectively interact with others by adjusting the timing with which he or she presents ideas, suggestions, criticism, or solutions. As you know, there is a time and a place for everything—you wouldn't ask for a promotion at an all-staff meeting, nor would you present your proposal for new business to the receptionist at a prospective company. A person who is good at timing is able to observe and react to situations that arise; furthermore, he or she is able to take advantage of the timing of the situation to achieve the results that are most desirable.

A person who has a poor Sense of Timing will tend to take inappropriate action, take the appropriate action at an inappropriate time, not take action at all, or a combination of these. Some signs that you may not be using your time effectively and interfacing poorly with other people—from prospective customers to your manager—include:

- The person you are interacting with could be fidgety.
- You are too verbose—you should only be talking about 20-25% of the time.
- The person you are interacting with doesn't say anything or responds slowly.

The real challenge of developing a Sense of Timing is that it is almost an intuitive behaviour. However, it IS something you can LEARN if you pay attention to it!

One of the key components of timing, and something crucial to DEVELOPING a Sense of Timing, is PACING. It is essential that you learn how to pace someone's tone, attitude, and speed of action or activity. Having a good Sense of Timing means that you are not too premature with your action, NOR too slow to respond.

You have to tune in to the verbal and nonverbal communication of the person you are interacting with, and in short, plug into the "mood" or pace of the situation and let that guide you in your remarks, questions, or actions. This is especially important when you are trying to promote a new idea or agenda or seeking buy-in from others.

Your goal in developing a Sense of Timing is to be able to match and mirror other people's reactions to you. Believe it or not, you can make other people feel comfortable with you by matching their speech patterns, voice inflections, body intensity and movement, posture, facial expressions, gestures, and even the speed and pace at which they breathe. But if you don't put all of your focus on the other person in order to "read" their verbal and non-verbal communication, you won't be able to match and mirror them.

What are skills associated with Sense of Timing?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Sense of Timing:

- Adjusts the timing with which he or she presents ideas, suggestions, criticism, or solutions.
- Is able to take advantage of timing to achieve results that are most desirable.
- Paces other people's tone, attitude, and speed of action or activity.
- Tunes in to both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- "Matches and mirrors" other people's reactions.
- Is observant about environments, personalities, and attitudes when approaching new situations.

How do you develop your own skills in Sense of Timing?

- Focus on one thing at a time—the person you are interacting with.
- Look for non-verbal communication.
- Don't rush—let the person you are interacting with or the situation you are in tell you when to move to the next step.
- Don't be too concerned with acceptance. How you present yourself is important, but your focus should not be on yourself, but on your customer.
- Don't talk too much! Listen, listen, listen!
- Look for signs of impatience.
- Make sure that the person you are talking with answers questions directly or honestly. If he or she isn't, rephrase your questions or take another approach.
- Learn how to pace someone's tone, attitude, and speed of action or activity.
- Be sensitive to other people's movements. Remember to mirror and match!
- Be prepared for any questions you may get—know your topic forwards and backwards.
- Be observant about the situation surrounding your discussion. What other issues may affect the outcome of this discussion?
- What benefit does your idea, product, or plan offer the person with whom you are speaking? Make sure you communicate that benefit.
- Be flexible!
- Keep your key points fresh in your mind so that you can re-group and emphasise them if the conversation or interaction goes differently from what you expected.
- If possible, lay groundwork for difficult or important conversations before you have them. Send background information, give overviews of the topic, etc., to the person/people you will be meeting with BEFORE your meeting.
- If you are unsuccessful at convincing the other person to support your idea, buy your product, or follow your plan, keep the door open for future interactions. Be as polite as possible and follow up with the individual regularly.
- Seek to improve your presentation skills—practice interacting with individuals, small groups, and large groups—learn what you can do to be better at it.
- Keep your cool. Stay calm no matter what happens in your discussion—don't be overconfident if things look positive, but don't show distress if things seem negative.

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Activities

Activity 1: Matching and Mirroring

In this activity, you will be practicing your ability to "Match and Mirror" other people. We'll start small—working with a friend or family member—then work our way up to implementing the idea in your daily workplace.

1. Ask a friend or family member the following questions. Take note of their expressions, mannerisms, posture, and even breathing speed as you interact with them. Make sure you ask follow-up questions to keep the discussion going. When you are finished, ask the person you talked with for their assessment of your behavior.

— Tell me about the happiest day of your life. What was it like? Who was there? Why did you feel so happy?

— Tell me about the most difficult thing you have ever experienced. What was it like? What made it so difficult? How did you overcome the experience?

2. Ask a co-worker or trusted colleague the following questions. Take note of their expressions, mannerisms, posture, and even breathing speed as you interact with them. Make sure you ask follow-up questions to keep the discussion going. When you are finished, ask the person you talked with for their assessment of your behavior.

— Tell me about the thing you are most proud of that you have accomplished professionally. What is it? Why are you so proud of it? What do you want to accomplish next?

— What is the most difficult thing you have done professionally? Why was it so difficult? What helped you get through the situation?

3. Now, practice your "matching and mirroring" skills in a "real" situation. Make a conscious effort to match and mirror next time you are talking with your supervisor, a customer, or a supplier. Pay attention to their expressions, mannerisms, etc., just as you did when you practiced with your friends and co-workers

Activity 2: Hindsight

1. Can you think of a situation in which you observed someone with a poor sense of timing? What did he/she do? What made the timing so bad? Did he/she accomplish what he/she hoped for? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of a situation in which YOU approached a situation with a poor sense of timing? What did you do wrong? Why was your timing so bad? Could you have altered your behavior? Would you have gotten a different result if your timing had been better?

Activity 3: Practice Makes Perfect

A sense of timing doesn't just involve one conversation or interaction. Rather, someone with a good sense of timing recognizes that the big picture matters, too. In this activity, we'll think of a goal you want to accomplish, then try to see what external or big picture things will affect you as you try to achieve your goal.

Think of something you want to accomplish, but need other people's support to achieve. Some examples would include: getting a raise, implementing a new plan, developing a new product, or selling a product to a customer. Think of your own goal, then... get prepared to present it!

1. What is the goal?
2. Why is the goal important to you?
3. What benefits does the goal offer you?
4. What benefits does the goal offer someone else?
5. Whose support do you need to accomplish this goal? Why?
6. What benefits does the goal offer the person whose support you seek?
7. What materials do you need to present your idea best?
8. What other issues are on the horizon right now? What else might the person whose support you seek be thinking about? Why?
9. Is now a good time to present your idea? Why or why not?
10. If now isn't a good time, when do you think would be better? Why?
11. If now is a good time, why?
12. Specifically, what support do you need? Time? Person-hours? Money?
13. What would make someone MOST likely to support you?
14. What would make someone LEAST likely to support you?
15. Who else's support do you already have?
16. What have you already accomplished toward meeting the goal?

A big part of developing your Sense of Timing is honing your observation skills. Make time to practice being observant, both in your personal and professional life. Here are some hints on how to do this:

1. Sit still in one place at home, and write down as many things about your surroundings as you can. What objects do you notice? Have they always been where they are now?
2. Sit down a week later at home, and write down as many things as you can about your surroundings. Compare your list to last week's. What's changed? What's the same?
3. In a staff meeting at work, observe other people's expressions. What might they be thinking? What is their reaction to specific other people (e.g., the CEO, the VP, an engineer, an IT person, etc.)?
4. Watch neighborhood children playing. Observe their interactions. Does one seem to be in charge? What games do they play? How do they act when adults are present?

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