

THE STRATEGIST

Bing's Manual

BY STANLEY BING

People often say what they don't mean, if they mean anything at all, which they often don't. But bodies don't lie. That's why it helps to be able to recognize and deliver certain physical actions that can convey truth in silence.



1. The Cocked Gun

Particularly useful in restaurants. Place hammer of thumb at right angles to barrel of forefinger. Pop hammer down while aiming the total "handgun" right between the subject's eyes. At same time, wink knowingly and issue small "click" from corner of mouth. Keep it smooth, simultaneous, and friendly.

Message conveyed: "You're okay with me, Bud, but I don't want to talk to you right now. Catch you later, definitely."

2. The Provisional Waggle

When either "yes" or "no" is ill-advised. Place hand on horizontal axis, palm down, with fingers spread. Shimmy hand in alter-



nating clockwise and counter-clockwise motion, taking care to keep all limpness from wrist. Facial expression may range from amusement with full eyebrow involvement to incredulous crimp at corner of mouth.

Message: "I'm not up to making a firm determination just yet, but I can say, without too much

reflection, that I have some serious questions before we go to paper on it."

3. Thumb Usage

The thumb is massively important in business, for reasons that are incompletely understood. Perhaps, simply, because it is blunt.



The thumb briskly bitten and flipped forward is a renaissance sign of contempt now fallen into sad disuse. The thumb that remains mouthbound is a sign of serious mental decay and should be attended to immediately by professional help or corporate counseling, whichever is more comprehensively covered by the victim's medical insurance.

Of course, there is the inane, obsolete "a-okay." A circle is made with the thumb and index finger and thrust forth with beamish grin of dumb approval.

Message: "Gee! That's a-okay! And I'm an idiot!"

4. Back-slamming

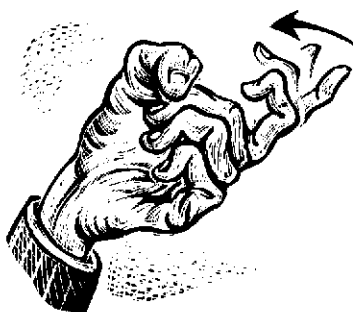
The backslap has been overused by insincere jerks to the point that it is now well nigh useless. What a pity. A good slap on the back is the closest two businessmen can get without drinking.

The real article is firm enough to be felt as encouragement and not unmanly affection, soft enough to be pleasant and warm in a good-buddy sort of way. In really potent relationships or situations the backslap may be followed by a cogent shoulder squeeze. Refrain from NFL-style tushy-patting, however, unless your culture is more evolved than mine.

Message: "Man to man, Jack, you're one okay s.o.b."

5. Digital Beckoning

Used primarily by guys on the telephone who want to invite you in without interrupting their conversational flow. The index finger of the dominant hand is crooked in the classic manner and vehemently wiggled at the object. It is then followed through with a vigorous downward thrust directing the visitor into the nearest available chair.



Message: "I've got something more important hanging fire at this instant, but the minute it's disposed of, you're my number-one priority. Till then, man, listen and learn."

6. High, Low, and Intermediate Fives

A more circumscribed area of the

hand is involved than the one used in sports or hanging out with the guys between subway cars. The arc is more controlled, and only the tips of the fingers are involved. Establish eye contact with the other guy and issue the Level, as in, "Gimme five, Morty" (traditional), or "High five, babe" (above the eyebrows, no jumping). A Low Five can be requisitioned by murmuring "Five," and offering your small target at crotch level or behind the back. With formerly enlight-



ened '60s types, you may find yourself embroiled in an elaborate series of struts, grasps, and twists. Do the best you can.

Message: "Yo, bro. What it is."

7. The Finger

Message: "Confidentially, you stink."

A couple of summers ago, I rented a shanty in a vacation town where captains of industry gather to swim, party, and toss another shrimp on the barbie. The road teemed with BMWs and other Germanic totems of affluence and power. I drove a Buick. Wherever I went—the beach, the \$2-muffin store, the fruit stand where strawberries sold for slightly less than Krugerrands—executives behind padded wheels cut me off and gave me the Finger with a massive upward thrust and the black glint of murder in their eyes. Never in my life have I been flipped the bird with such frequency and vehemence. This, I thought, must be what they mean by "taking the job home with you." Only on vacation, however, can you do it to another guy's face. Without laughing, at any rate. **E**