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# Actions Speak Louder Than Words

by JOHN BOE

**T**he 1960 Presidential Debates between Vice President Nixon and Senator Kennedy were the first nationally televised debates in presidential campaign history. With the advent of television the debates took on a visual dimension and for the first time, 70 million voters were given the opportunity to not only hear the candidates, but to visually compare them as well.

Surprisingly, opinion polls revealed a sharp contrast between the voters who actually watched the debates on TV versus those who had merely listened to them on the radio. While radio listeners clearly thought that Nixon had won the first debate, television viewers were captivated by Kennedy's smile, charm and athletic appearance. The majority of viewers interviewed reported that Nixon's five-o'clock shadow and darting eyes made him appear sinister and far less presidential than Kennedy.

The television cameras underscored the significance of nonverbal communication and forever changed the political landscape.

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## Are You Missing Your Prospect's "Buy Signals?"

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Think about the tremendous advantage you would have as a baseball manager if you knew the opposing team's signals and were able to anticipate their game plan. For example, suppose you knew in advance that the other team was planning to steal second base. Obviously, your team would have a competitive edge because you would be able to adjust your strategy as necessary. Likewise, a professional salesperson would be wise to monitor their prospect's body language and adjust their presentation accordingly. By reading their prospect's gestures they will minimize perceived sales pressure and know when it's appropriate to close the sale.

In 1872, Charles Darwin published the book *The Expressions in Man and Animals* and launched the modern study of nonverbal communication. Essentially, body language is a mixture of movement, posture and tone of voice. The study of nonverbal communication is similar to learning a foreign language in that it re-

quires time and effort to achieve fluency. Acquiring this important communication skill will make you a more effective trainer, a stronger recruiter and a more persuasive leader.

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## Body Language Quiz

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If you're a manager, consider using this quiz at your next training meeting to assess your sales team's current level of expertise. When sitting in on a sales appointment with your sales rep, be sure to incorporate nonverbal communication feedback in your critique.

Do you have a working knowledge of body language? See how many of the eight questions you can answer.

1. What emotion is associated with the "palm to chest" gesture?
  - A. Superiority
  - B. Critical judgment
  - C. Sincerity
  - D. Confidence
2. What is the meaning of the "thumb under the chin" gesture?
  - A. Deceit

- B. Boredom  
C. Anxiety  
D. Critical judgment
3. What nonverbal message is conveyed with the “chin rub” gesture?  
A. Decision  
B. Deceit  
C. Control  
D. None of the above
4. What does it mean when someone rubs his or her nose?  
A. Superiority  
B. Anticipation  
C. Dislike  
D. Anger
5. What message is conveyed when someone touches their eyeglasses to their lips?  
A. Interest  
B. Stalling  
C. Disbelief  
D. Impatience
6. When a person looks over their eyeglasses, what message are they sending?  
A. Contempt  
B. Distrust  
C. Scrutiny  
D. Suspicion
7. What is the impact of nonverbal communication in a face-to-face conversation?  
A. 20%  
B. 40%  
C. 70%  
D. 85%
8. Which of the following gestures is/are associated with lying?  
A. Talking through fingers  
B. Eye rub  
C. Ear rub  
D. Nose wrinkle  
E. Lack of direct eye contact  
F. All of the above

### Quiz Answer Key

1. (C) The palm to chest gesture indicates sincerity.
2. (D) The thumb under the chin gesture indicates critical judgment and a negative attitude. A good way to get your prospect to drop this gesture is to hand them something.
3. (A) The chin rub gesture indicates decision. When you see this gesture, avoid the temptation to interrupt. If the gestures that follow chin stoking are positive, ask for the order.
4. (C) When someone rubs his or her nose, it's an indication that they don't like the subject. When you see this gesture you would be wise to probe with open-ended questions to draw out your customer's concern.
5. (B) When someone touches his or her eyeglasses to their lips, it signals that they're stalling or delaying a decision. If they put their glasses back on, it's a buy signal. If they put them away, you have more work to do.
6. (C) When a person looks

over his or her eyeglasses, it indicates judgment and scrutiny.

7. (C) Research indicates more than 70% of our communication is achieved nonverbally. In addition, studies show that nonverbal communication has a much greater reliability than the spoken word. Therefore, you would be wise to rely on body language as a more accurate reflection of a person's true feelings.

8. (F) All of the above. The statue of the Three Wise Monkeys accurately depicts the three primary hand-to-face gestures associated with deceit. See no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil.

While you may not be called upon to participate in a presidential debate or manage a baseball team, as a field leader, you need to be able to train your sales team to recognize their prospect's “buy signals.” By teaching your agents key body language gestures they will be able to reduce conflict, build rapport with their customers, and dramatically increase their sales effectiveness!

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*John Boe, a sales trainer and motivational speaker, helps companies recruit, train and motivate salespeople to achieve peak performance. He is a leading authority on body language and temperament styles. To view his online video demo, or to have John Boe speak at your next event, visit [www.johnboe.com](http://www.johnboe.com) or call (877) 725-3750.*

