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# How To Be “Up To Par” In Your People-Reading Skills

by BILL BROOKS



In order for salespeople to succeed in today's highly competitive marketplace, they must be able to effectively read their prospect in more ways than one to gauge where they stand with that prospect. Unfortunately, far too many salespeople lack this essential skill. Here are a few of the 400 or so ways that you can become better at reading your prospect.

Body language could be the single most important way that a salesperson can read a prospect. These unspoken signals include power hints, insecurity hints, disagreement hints, boredom hints, evaluation hints and indecision hints.

**Power hints** are apparent when your prospect displays confidence, superiority and a dominant attitude through his or her touching fingertips, placing his or her hands behind the head, meeting the salesperson with piercing eye contact, or standing while the salesperson is sitting. The best way the salesperson can meet this attitude is to allow the prospect to maintain his or her confidence and power.

**Insecurity** is signaled when your prospect wrings his or her hands, fidgets, bows his or her head, makes minimal eye contact with you, clears his or her throat, or twitches. The key strategy for you to follow when in such a situation is to work to make the prospect feel more secure. Allowing your prospect to achieve a level of comfort with the salesperson will assure a more positive and effective interaction.

**Disagreement hints** involve situations in which skepticism, disagreement and even anger are evidenced when a person's body is angled toward or away from you, when the face is tense, or when the arms are crossed. Disagreement with what you are say-

ing does not mean that the possibilities of making the sale are completely diminished. However, it is wise for you to discover what exactly your prospect disagrees with, then clarify what he or she said in order to ease that anger.

***Listening not only to what the prospect is saying, but precisely how he or she says it, will give you insight into the thoughts that are going through the prospect's mind.***



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**Boredom hints** are signified by a complete disinterest in what you are saying. This frame of mind is given away by ceiling watching, fiddling, shuffling papers, picking at clothing, foot tapping, a blank stare, or looking out the window. When you find yourself in a situation such as this, you should attempt to liven up your presentation, or attempt to involve the prospect more in the conversation.

**Evaluation hints**, which most likely indicate a level of interest in your product or service, include glasses in mouth, hand on chin, nodding, index finger to mouth, and good eye contact. All of these unspoken signals point to the possibility that the prospect is intrigued by what he or she hears. This is a good thing!

**Indecision hints**, such as pencil in mouth, head scratching, head down, or cleaning of glasses, tend to mean that your prospect is unsure about what he or she is hearing. In this situation, you should continue to build value in the hope of convincing your prospect of the advantages of purchasing the product or service.

Body language, while being a powerful indicator in terms of where you stand with your prospect, is not the only way that you can effectively read others.

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#### Honing Listening Skills

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Listening aggressively is another key skill that will allow you to maintain your "edge." Listening not only to what the prospect

is saying, but precisely how he or she says it, will give you insight into the thoughts that are going through the prospect's mind. This will in turn help you to analyze where you are in regard to making the sale.

Talking less is an obvious tip, yet many salespeople continue to ignore it. You automatically read people better when you talk less. When you talk, you are obviously concentrating on what you're trying to say. Therefore, it is impossible that you are giving your full attention to the spoken or unspoken signals the prospect is giving off.

Being discreet is the final tip that you should take into account in terms of reading people. You should be careful what you do with the information you have learned through reading your prospect.

Reading people has proven to be an invaluable skill for those salespeople who strive for success. Prospects give off unspoken signals, which can completely clue salespeople in to what the prospect thinks, wants or needs. Unfortunately, far too many salespeople today ignore the value of reading people in favor of their own methods of sales. They should keep in mind that selling is all about fulfilling the needs of the prospect, and if they fail to read the signals that show what the prospect wants to have happen, then these salespeople are most certainly selling below their potential. This is good advice, too! □

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