

People reading as a viable competitive sales tool

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ABSTRACT

The old adage “Nothing happens until a sale is made” most likely is true given that all business activities ultimately are geared toward getting and repeating the sale, be it big or small, a consumer or industrial purchase, or an individual or group/team sale. That is, the “sale” is crucial and pivotal to every firm’s competitive capability and actions. Stated in a simpler way, the bottom line of competition is always eventually about sales. This paper examines two questions: (1) can the seller use people reading as a viable competitive sales tool, and (2) what understandings regarding people reading could increase the seller’s competitive effectiveness and efficiency? Definitions of people reading are provided as well as suggestions for achieving better people reading skills in general, a typology and outcomes for effective people reading, and specific signals or clues that can be used by sellers to read their clients.

Keywords: People reading, intuition, gut feeling, sales effectiveness, gaining competitive advantage

INTRODUCTION

Companies need each and every competitive advantage they can get given the over-the-top competitive, yet still recessed, current-day business environment. A competitive advantage is any time that a company can do something better than their competitors, be it better production, quality, cost structure, image, promotion, service, value, innovation/cutting edge, sales, etc. Essentially, in order to have a competitive edge, a company must be distinctive in the mind of the consumer or buyer in some important way that is memorable to that consumer or remarkable to that consumer, i.e., worth remarking, commenting, or buzzing about with obviously accompanying dollars being spent.

Because competitors can be very good at what they do, the battle ground between competition often is played out in the details of a business offering including aspects from each of the functional areas, i.e., operations and production, supply chain management, sales and marketing, promotion, finance and accounting, IT, management, and so forth. Alignment theory notes that all of these functional areas must work together to create a unique, positive experience in each and every consumer's mind that eventually contributes to or leads to bottom-line sales (Hooper, Huff, & Thirkell, 2010; Strahle, Spiro, & Acito, 1996). This unique, multi-faceted experience is staged to bring us to the point of a transaction, carry us through that transaction, and move us beyond single transactions to coveted repeat customers and profitable relationships/partnerships.

Increasingly, however, organizational systems and structures are, by themselves, proving inadequate to develop the kind of close communication, collaboration, and networking necessary to build and sustain those kinds of close relationships with both internal and external customers. In addition to the kinds of analytical and organizational skills associated with management as science, comes the necessity of "emotional intelligence" and "social intelligence" (Goleman, 1995, 1996). These abilities to relate to the emotions and social dynamics between oneself and others are arguably as important, or even more important, than intellectual intelligence, particularly in fields such as marketing. This paper focuses on a critical subset of these skills called "people reading." The importance of people reading in strategic interaction and selling is recognized increasingly (Ames, Weber, & Zou, 2012). As such, it is worth examining the use of people reading as a viable competitive sales tool.

Marketers and sellers do use people reading. The adept seller uses the skill of people reading to gain a competitive advantage. That is, the seller seeks out verbal and nonverbal clues, signs of information, or nexus of behaviors that can be used to assess what people are like, how to communicate with them, if they are ready to buy, and unfortunately how to manipulate them. "The 'art of reading people' is how we discover the intangible needs for our clients...There are two parts to the process: collection of all of the client information at an intuitive level, and understanding how the materials will affect the energy of the client...Our job is to get inside our client's head and figure out what the person wants" (Filippelli, 2010, 36). Hence, people reading can be a valuable competitive skill but it needs to be used by the seller responsibly. This paper defines what is meant by the term people reading. In addition, suggestions for improving the seller's people reading skills in general are given with specific signals or clues that can be used to read people as well as a typology and outcomes for effective people reading. Specific clues or signals are provided in seven areas: physical appearance, body language, voice patterns, communication techniques, the content of what is said, observable actions, and the environment.

PEOPLE READING DEFINED

“People reading” frequently has been defined in terms of nonverbal communication. While this probably is appropriate, it may not be complete. So, let us begin by acknowledging what people reading is not. It is not telepathy, not psychic ability, not mysticism, not people who talk to spirits, not magic, and not mesmerism. These often may involve trickery, misdirection, illusion, and forcing. (Powell, 2009) Here are some actual definitions of people reading:

- People reading is “neither a science nor an innate gift. It is a matter of knowing what to look and listen for, having the curiosity and patience to gather the necessary information, and understanding how to recognize the patterns in a person’s appearance, body language, voice, and conduct...ability to see the pattern of someone’s personality and beliefs emerge from among often conflicting traits and characteristics.” (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, xiii)
- Reading is “(1) to receive or take in the sense of, (2) to interpret the meaning or significance of, (3) to recognize or interpret as if by reading, (4) to learn the nature of by observing outward expression or signs, and (5) to acquire information from storage and to sense the meaning of data in recorded and coded form.” (Merriam-Webster, 1999)
- People reading “aims to teach you how to evaluate people’s complex characteristics and how to see the overall pattern those characteristics form – the pattern that truly can reveal and predict behavior” (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, xiv).

As such, people reading has an exterior focus of collecting data about a person or situation and interpreting it, just as if one were reading a book. People reading says “I see or feel or experience this in someone else indirectly...I am aware of this in them...it is their experience that I am viewing as on TV...it is not my own direct experience.” The key is awareness, awareness of what something outside of us is saying or portraying to us. That is, people reading is other-reading or awareness of someone else’s position or experience. This means that the seller as reader is aware indirectly of what it is like to “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes” yet understands clearly what is his/her own personal experience and what experience belongs to another. This capacity is very compatible with the idea that sellers typically are viewed as having a high degree of empathy.

To the degree that one has mastered direct knowing of him/herself, one is able to read another’s direct experience, while still knowing clearly that it is their experience rather than one’s own. That is, people reading is indirectly knowing the experience of another, and requires mastery that allows the truth to be present and to be seen. Mastery requires though that one know the difference between his/her “stuff” and someone else’s “stuff,” yet someone else’s experience and thoughts can still be “read” even if not directly experienced.

PEOPLE READING SKILLS: A TYPOLOGY

“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.” (Brooks, 2006, 49) Researchers have only begun to study the people reader and the use of people reading skills in sales. Effective people reading skills can be categorized using two continua: (1) an awareness of both behavioral and contextual cues, and (2) an awareness of both overt cues (relatively easy

to interpret) and covert cues (difficult to interpret without hidden, "insider" information. These can be illustrated in Figure 1 (Appendix).

Verbal Cues

To truly understand what the customer is communicating, active listening skills, are critical for people reading. Knowing how to reflect and ask clarifying questions determines the accuracy of a seller's interpretations and conclusions. This involves significant investments of time, attentiveness, and patience. (Brooks, 2006; Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008)

Non-verbal Cues

Research proves most of a conversation's meaning is not verbal, leaving the bulk of the meaning beyond the capacity of words to convey. These subtle non-verbal clues are particularly valuable because they are often unconscious reactions clients unknowingly give. Many facial expressions can be interpreted universally, including anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, and happiness. (Blum, 1998; Roberts, 2007) Many cannot, however, making a majority of people surprisingly bad at discerning real emotions or intentions behind others' facial expressions. It seems that men are worse at it than women. In addition, earlier childhood and lifetime experiences may cloud one's reading ability particularly in some areas. (Blum, 1998) Also, different cultures have different mannerisms and signs of underlying behavior. The same gesture from different parts of the world can have very different meanings. Relatively large and simple cultural differences often are identified on the spot, however, subtle or complex differences tend to be identified much later in the communication process and may require considerable effort and money to clean up or even result in failed sales. (Laroche, 1999) These micro expressions require careful observation, because they are often fleeting physical responses to emotional states (Roberts, 2007). Over time, these observations yield a baseline. "True understanding comes from identifying recurring themes" (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, 43). Get to know a prospect's baseline and then you can see when he/she deviates from the norm. Unusual deviations require closer inspection, and may indicate deception. For example, liars may wrinkle their noses, rub their noses, or cover their mouths. As noted by Dimitrius (1998, 41), "[If I] could deliver one message, it would be that to read people effectively you must gather enough information about them to establish a consistent pattern."

Environmental Cues

An individual's environment impacts his/her speech, appearance, and behavior. Gather information from the environment, e.g., listen, feel, smell, etc. The neighborhood clients live in, the friends and interests that they pursue, these can be good measures of a person's character and what he/she values. (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008; Sotala, 2010) Different cultures have different mannerisms and signs of underlying behavior. (Blum, 1998) Issues around conformity and independence, personal image, and reputation often play critical roles in purchasing decisions, leading Sotala (2010) to advocate starting with the prospect's most striking characteristics. This more holistic approach to people reading often distinguishes effective performers. It assesses the whole package of clues and not just one or two. "Taken alone, almost any trait may be misleading" (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, xiii). However, finding this

nexus of relevant data requires a time investment, making the temptation to prematurely curtail the search for relevant data ever present.

Personal Cues

Perhaps some of the most important and deeply hidden cues involve personal information. Emotional reactions, childhood experiences, personal preferences, and prejudices deeply affect decision making, and recognizing them is the hallmark of the excellent people reader. (Blum, 1998) Most interestingly, they not only affect the client, they affect the sellers, all of whom come with emotional history and baggage. Brooks (2006) warns that to read people realistically, the seller must be objective, and avoid reading others according to one's own projected idiosyncrasies or preferences. The ultimate goal is to read the other person's story, i.e., a three-plus dimensional story. A story is a natural package for organizing, comprehending, and communicating social events and for making sense of uncertainty. A story is better remembered and even toddlers can produce basic stories or narratives. The problem arises when an observer's own goals may influence social perception or people reading abilities...it flavors the story that is perceived. (Costabile, 2011)

A NEXUS OF SIGNALS AND BEHAVIORS FOR READING PEOPLE

"I can't believe I didn't see the signs. They were right there in front of me! How could I have been so blind?" (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, 3). When reading a client, a seller must look for patterns in his/her client's traits and characteristics that point in a particular direction rather than isolating only one specific trait and ascribing it with meaning. Fortunately, there seems to be agreement that people reading is "a skill that can be learned and applied with equal success by anyone – any time, any place" (Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008, xiii; see also Gilleland, et al., 1999; Margoshes, 1998; Tesolin, 2007; Brooks, 2006; Riggio, 2011; Sotala, 2010; Bhasin, 2011. Sunoo (1998, 76) concludes: "Is 'people reading' an innate gift or an acquired skill? It's definitely a skill, but like all skills, some people are inherently going to be better at it. However, everybody has ability to read people better than they do. Just like everyone can learn to bowl, if they practice." Out of all the potential approaches outlined in the previous typology, Sunoo (1998) identified seven critical areas that effective sellers assess: physical appearance, body language, voice patterns, communication techniques, content of what they say, observable actions, and the environment. This section will more extensively explore some of the clues or signals to look for in each of these seven key areas. (Sunoo, 1998; Frain, 1998; Kalajian, 1998; Colberg, 1998; Margoshes, 1998; Phipps, 1998; Bell, 1999; Adams, 1996; Bond, 1999; Fatt, 1999; Futtrell, 2011; Boorom, et al., 1998; Comstock, et al., 1997; Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 2008; Bhasin, 2012)

Physical Appearance

"The face is a rather opaque window to the soul" (Porter, et al., 2008). The face has 44 muscles that can form 5,000 expressions. These expressions can become etched on the face and hence are readable. "Reading people's facial expressions and body language takes a big effort – its emotional intelligence and making sure you're picking up on the cues and paying attention to whether people are understanding you" (O'Hara, 2011, 10). The art of reading faces or Siang

Mien has survived in Chinese culture for over 3000 years (Wise, 1998). For example, deep set eyes are associated with being reflective, reserved, cautious, and observant. Eyes spaced more than one eye's width apart are associated with far-sighted imagination and the hating of details. A jowl indicates power and the ability to exercise it but a flabby jowl shows fallen power or energy. A covered mouth may show nervousness while thick full lips indicate generosity, and thin lips indicate conciseness with words and selective generosity to those close to us. A smile usually is viewed as open and friendly, however, a smile most often is used to mask one's true emotion. While people like warm smiles, some 19 versions of smiles have been identified so far. (Blum, 1998) Also, when the sides of the face are mismatched or more asymmetrical than usual, it indicates that the expression is voluntarily created rather than genuine (Coffman, 2012). If people do not look you in the eye, it may be that they are dishonest, nervous, distracted, thinking, being polite, or from another culture. Wide set eyes are viewed as tolerant, flexible, and forgiving. Staring is seen as confrontational, aggressive, and hostile. Low set ears reflect idealism. People with ears set above the base of the nose tend to be more realistic in their approach to life and relationship and see people and situations as they are. Bushy eyebrows indicate a nonstop thinker and tangled eyebrow hairs point to an unconventional thinker who sees all issues and attracts conflict. Individuals with flat eyebrows set closer to the eyes tend to be more direct in their speech and want the bottom line quicker. Arched eyebrows indicate a need for more description and elaborate details. An angular down-turned nose shows shrewdness, financial shrewdness, and ability to judge value. Embarrassment may be shown with a nervous laugh, averting eye contact, shaking head, blushing, hands coming up to cover the face, rubbing the side of the nose, trying to appear smaller, shrinking into ourselves, or leaving the room. Fear may be indicated with eyes wide open, screaming, gulping or swallowing, shaking, or licking lips. A blank look may indicate mental or physical illness, duress, or shock. Depression may be indicated by withdrawal, talking less, the normal expression of the face shut down, distress, or detachment. Deception often is accompanied with stress. "Stress usually displays itself in some physical manner, including defensive postures such as crossing arms with palms hidden across the center of the body, turning away from a questioner, and nervous gesturing, particularly touching the face, as well as bouncing legs and fidgeting of the fingers." (Roberts, 2007, 1) A broad face indicates confidence while a narrow face is seen as more cautious needing more information and more time to think. A face showing interest and attention is seen as more credible, a fallen or bland face has probably found something to be not important. A facial change may indicate a need to elaborate on something important to the person. A head turned away is viewed as not good, an averted face may show an averted heart (Lowndes, 1995). A face with an expression of dullness is associated with having no dynamism or low energy. Interestingly, a lack of facial animation may interfere with forming relationships (Blum, 1998). Very importantly, the discrepancy between what our faces show and what we think they show is large and even more so for negative emotions (*Psychology Today*, 1995). As a final note, altering one's appearance (e.g., face lift) will not change behavior (*Management Services*, 1999). For example, a facial tattoo often signals a serious crime offender (Mangu-Ward, 2009). Porter, et al. (2008) found that inferences of trustworthiness are formed instantaneously upon seeing a face, and, these inferences endure over time. Also, faces rated as trustworthy have been given low ratings of aggressiveness and high ratings of kindness.

Body Language

“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” (Brooks, 2006, 49). Body language in particular must be viewed as a nexus of signals. (Raudsepp, 1993; Waltman, et al., 1993; Marchetti, 1996) Reading only one clue may lead to misinterpretation. Gestures increase the impact of the communication but the lower on the body the gesture, the lower the energy and influence. Gestures are best done with hand, arms, or head and should be done without nervousness or unnaturalness. The majority of gestures are done with the hands and arms (Goldman, 2012). Handling a product shows a subtle bond in that the person is not aloof or separate. Crossed arms tend to show being defensive, cold, holding back, stress, and tension. Holding the arms crossed also can indicate stress. Open palms indicate sincerity and openness. Pointing at the listener may be seen as aggressive and hostile. Leaning closer to a person shows interest and a lack of defensiveness. Nodding indicates agreement, understanding, active listening, and concern. A head held up can indicate confidence unless it is held too high in which case it may be seen as aloofness or patronizing. Moving the head slightly from side to side while verbally saying yes may actually signal disagreement and not wanting to argue about it. Also, picking lint from one’s clothing may indicate disagreement and not being bothered to argue about it. (Goldman, 2012) Hands clasped behind the back show anger and frustration where hands clasped behind the head show arrogance. Rubbing or wringing the hands or clasping and unclasping the hands often indicate nervousness. Hands in the pockets show lack of comfort and, potentially, a hidden agenda or secretiveness. A closed fist may be seen as menacing while an open palm suggests honesty and sincerity. Hands on the hips can show defiance. (Goldman, 2012) Posture involves the movement of the body as a whole (*The American Salesman*, April, 1996). A closed posture of folded arms and crossed legs may show a closed personality, aloofness, rejection, and lack of confidence. An open posture has arms spread in a relaxed manner, leaning forward, and is seen as curious, intense, and more confident. It is best to not lean against walls or doorways. Changing posture periodically shows confidence. Squared shoulders to your client show honesty and approachability. Shoulders down and hunched a bit can indicate ease, not being afraid, not being at attention, and being relaxed. Shrugging the shoulders with palms up can show that a person does not care, does not know, or is bored. If the body is turned away, it may signal objections or a cold shoulder (Lowndes, 1995). Leg and foot movements can show discomfort. Legs off to the side may be seen as less open and straight forward and even dishonest. Encroaching on one’s personal space can show aggression and insensitivity. When buyer and seller like each other, then there is less distance between them (Abrams, 1994). However, a space invader is viewed as back slapping, arm gripping, hand crushing, and in your face (*Management Today*, 1996). If one is taller, then try to minimize the difference. Power or the lack of power can be displayed by rigid attention, saluting, stiffness, and not being at ease. Resentment can be seen by crossed arms, stiffened body, pouting, and looking away. A good handshake needs to reach all the way into the other person’s hand, matching their pressure. A deep breath followed by a sigh of tension relief may indicate that a decision has been made. Distracting sounds and movements include twisting a ring, drumming a pen, playing with hair or an earring, and picking one’s fingernails. The colors of clothing can communicate messages, e.g., black-death and depression, purple-sickness and nausea, and yellow-will cause irritation to the retina of a person over 50 in 5 minutes. If we are misaligned or uptight, people tend to resist our comments. If we are more relaxed, then others will respond more positively to us. (Anderson, 1998) Attractive people are found to be more

credible. (Trumfio, 1994) In general, however, people tend to believe the nonverbal message over the verbal (Abrams, 1994). (Rigby, 2011)

Voice Patterns

Approximately 55% of a communication is nonverbal while 38% is tone of voice and 7% is actual words (Metcalf, 1998). Rapid speech gives the impression of competence, intelligence, objectivity, dominance, and dynamism, while a slower rate of speech can be viewed as more composed, honest, people-oriented, and benevolent (Nolen, 1995). Listeners tend to like fluency, deeper and more varied pitch, vocal pleasantness, and medium-length turns (time in-between the speakers' remarks). Listeners also tend to like regional or in-group accents similar to their own. "Some social scientists suggest that the impressions we make are so strongly affected by the way we sound that we cannot expect to communicate a desired image until we sound both socially attractive and competent." (Nolen, 1995) On the other hand, a long answer with a lot of extraneous volunteered information may indicate lying. The phrase "in all honesty" may be a tip-off for deception. If you are speaking to someone who is visual, use visual words. If you are speaking to someone who is feeling, use feel words. Create visual paragraphs with your voice to let the client know where you are at in your speaking. Different people have different communication styles such as dominant, interactive, steady, or cautious (Metcalf, 1998). Know how to speak to each of these styles. The seller needs to be aware of what quakes, shakes, volume, and tentativeness mean in the client. If a person is silent, he or she may be tuning you out. If the client is dropping out of the conversation, then the seller needs to ask an open-ended question. (Siegel, 1997) Dimitrius & Mazarrella (2008, 126) offer these suggestions for hearing the unspoken message:

- "Focus on the voice, not the words, in short spurts from time to time during a conversation.
- "Consider whether the vocal characteristics are voluntary (often manipulative) or involuntary (usually reflecting true emotion).
- "Look for patterns, extremes, and deviations from the person's normal voice.
- "Compare voice to body language and words.
- "Consider the context and environment in which the words are spoken."

Communication Techniques

How does the prospect answer a question, with a question or by rambling. How we answer a question may indicate defensive behavior, self-glorification, exaggeration, ingratiating behavior, self-criticism, or gossip. Humor can be used as a shield. "Just kidding" often means one is not kidding at all. Is the person trying to direct or control the conversation, what is their method and motive. Manipulation can be shown by manipulative answers, nonresponsive behavior, short answers, or answering a question with a question. Subterfuge also may be shown by pregnant pauses, interruptions, ramblings, and changing subjects. A loud voice may be used to control others or compensate for smallness. A soft voice may show lack of confidence. A halting voice could be calm assurance or indicate ease of being swayed. Fast speech could mean someone is nervous, anxious, or angry. Slow speech could indicate thoughtfulness, lying, or confusion. In general, the technique of mirroring someone else's body language, appearance, and energy level will enhance rapport unless it is done too insensitively and obviously.

(Trumfio, 1994) Here is a good example of communication technique: Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert quarreled about something early in their marriage. Prince Albert walked out of the room and went to his private quarters. The Queen followed, found the door locked, and began pounding on it. "Who's there?" Albert asked. "The Queen of England" was the reply. The door remained locked. More pounding followed, but then there was silence. The next sound was a gentle tap. "Who's there?" Albert asked. The Queen's reply: "Your wife, Albert." He opened the door immediately. (*The American Salesman*, 1996, September, 20) That is, the emotional elements of communication may be more highly related to relationship quality than actual verbal content. In fact, variables derived from the observational coding of emotions were found to predict relationship quality with more than 80% accuracy. (Waldinger, et al., 2004)

Content of What Is Said

A thought is a non-spoken or very quiet communication pulse. However, a thought is hard to decipher so more attention usually is put on an individual's spoken words. Importantly, words can reflect the behavioral characteristics and thought process of the person who spoke or wrote them. Word clues can help the reader analyze the words that were spoken or written. (Schafer, 2011) When the content of what is spoken is combined with nonverbal signals, then it is easier to decipher the real meaning. For example, lower credibility is portrayed through words and through low eye contact, shifting eyes, looking down, weak voice, speaks too slowly, long pauses, repetition of words, uhs, poor pronunciation, and a monotonous pitch. No interest is portrayed in an immobile face while an interested face shows nods, smiles, raised eyebrows, and quiet uh-huhs. What a client comments regarding hobbies or TV shows may indicate whether he or she is active or passive. People pattern mental attitudes or content material, e.g., the complainer, the I'm entitled, emotionally needy, what's in it for me mentality, negative person, and know it all. As sellers, our content must be specific and tactful to clients' communications. The extrovert is other-centered, getting energy from and focusing on people and things outside him/herself. The extrovert asks "how do I relate to other people and this?" The introvert is self-centered, self-contained, self-reliant, and tuned to an internal frequency. The introvert asks "how do people or things relate to me?" Defensiveness may be seen in crossed limbs, clenched teeth and lips, averting eye contact, and squaring the body in a confrontational way. Openness may be indicated by prolonged eye contact, warmth, relaxed smile, firm hand shake, kissing or embracing when greeting, standing close but not within someone's personal space, nothing crossed, open suit jacket, and facing the person to whom one is speaking. Sexual attraction is shown by making eye contact, laughing, staring, winking, blinking, wetting the lips, flipping the head or hair, intent listening, walking with a swagger or wiggle, or entering someone's personal space. Dishonesty is a combination of verbal, vocal, and visual cues, e.g., decrease in hand gestures, hand to face contact increases, sweating, shaking, sincere furrowed brow look, hand shrugs, running tongue over teeth, inappropriate familiarity, increased voice inflections, squirming, and sudden increase in voice pitch particularly at the beginning of the conversation (Zilke, 1996; Siegel, 1997). Anger is indicated by arms/legs/ankles crossed, short or rapid breath, stiff rigid posture, and pointing fingers. Emotional sensitivity may be associated with thin/soft/looser or porcelain-like skin as well as greater impressionability. Decisive and high energy types tend to have more resilient, thicker, firmer, and tighter skin. Thin and fine hair indicates that refined emotionality and quality is important. Thick or coarse hair indicates an

action orientation, ruggedness, and more focus on strength and quantity. Argumentativeness or stubbornness may be signaled by an angular, wedge-shaped chin. A wider, rounded chin indicates cooperation. Money making ability is shown by an angular downturned nose, a nose for good value and good price. An upturned nose is more indiscriminate with money. Self-confidence is associated with broad-faced people who go after what they want. Thin-faced individuals seem to lack natural confidence and must learn to be confident. (Roman, 1998) People with ears that appear to sit further away from the sides of the head are very possessive and have extreme need to collect people, things, and money. Individuals with larger irises are more apt to express their emotions, be sentimental, be romantic, and tend to fall in love quickly. People with smaller irises are reserved emotionally, self-centered, slower to develop feelings for others, and less apt to express themselves.

Observable Action

In particular, there may be contradictions between what a person says and does. You never really know a person until you see what choices he/she makes, and how those choices are carried forward in action. For example, a skeptical and less trusting person is more apt to watch cynical TV programs. A compassionate person is a better team player, less judgmental, more honest, has a better attitude, agonizes more over the effect of his/her decisions on others, and is not as decisive. A harsh person is more self-centered, critical, unforgiving, more analytical, quicker judger, and does not care as much about consequences. A person who is satisfied with life will tend to be kinder, respectful, and friendly with employees, probably self-confident, compassionate, and generous. If a person never achieved what he/she wanted, then he/she may be more critical of others and judgmental. If a person came from a supportive background, then he/she is more likely to be supportive. If a boss treats employees like servants, then he/she is more likely to be insecure, domineering, insensitive, and uncaring. Exaggerated movements or extreme enthusiasm often are a bluff and may indicate changing of the mind or dishonesty (Stettner, 1997). “Thumbs up” shows pleasure, success, victory, or playfulness. To recognize a prospect’s hot button, look for changes in behavior as signals that you are on a topic of concern. Excitement is shown by dilated pupils, higher/thinner voice, rapid blinking, flushed face, rapid/shallow breathing, avoidance of direct eye contact, and may shift to rapid body movement. The body will shut down in a perceived crisis or unfamiliar situation. In times of fear, hearing may diminish, there may be mild discomfort, peripheral vision can diminish, and taste can diminish. Questions can reveal more about who we are rather than answers, i.e., they get to the core of our thinking process. Also, the nonverbal actions of smiling, head nodding, direct eye contact and gaze, relaxed body positions, open body positions, and forward leaning are strong nonverbal cues that promote social attractiveness (Nolen, 1995).

Environment

Almost everyone is impacted by the environment in which they work; in particular, territory, personal space, and time (Nolen, 1995). As a result, environment also impacts intuitives and, hence, their degree of people reading accuracy. For example, a comfortable environment fosters trust (Adams, 1996). Also, when a people reader is in a positive mood, he/she has more accurate results (Hicks, et al., 2010). Look at the car, home, or car trunk...is it messy, meticulous, artistic, or careful. A messy desktop may signal a messy, disorganized

person. Environments have and reflect personality, so look at what a prospect surrounds him/herself with, e.g., calendar, what books and if read, pictures, degrees, aesthetic objects, etc. If they have plants and flowers around them, it may indicate sensuousness, sensitivity to beauty, and hospitality. What does the artwork hanging on the client's wall say about that individual. In the environment, seating arrangement is very important as seating position affects leadership. Team seating should place members on an equal level. A leader often will take a higher seating position. It is best to position yourself to face as many people in the group as possible. Side-by-side seating minimizes communication while face-to-face communication is optimal. Also, look at who a client surrounds him/herself with. Try taking a client out of his/her comfort zone to see how he/she really behaves. That is, managers may need to create an environment where individuals are likely to leave their natural tendencies behind in order to explore new possibilities. Past environment and cultural influences also are important to consider or understand. These influences often are complex and difficult to recognize given that cultural influences include race, national origin, religion, age, geographical origin, sexual orientation, economic background, profession, and the individual's other peer groups. (Sunoo, 1998; Dane, et al., 2011) Providing an emotionally healthy workplace wherein individuals are less stressed and under less misery can encourage intuition and people reading skills (Tesolin, 2007). Khatri & Ng (2000) found that intuition needs to be used cautiously and less often in a stable or moderately unstable environment, but intuition needs to be used more often in a highly unstable environment. According to Eugene Sadler-Smith, "The paradox of expert intuition is that it is borne out of many years (rule of thumb is ten) experience and learning in an environment that is conducive to developing good intuitive judgment" (Norton, 2010, 40). Hence, it is important to create an organizational culture that values and nurtures people readers. This can be done by requiring leaders to share their people-reading experiences and to give weight to intuition alongside rational, process-driven analysis in business decision making (Mavor, Sadler-Smith, & Gray, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Reading people is a valuable skill in sales. Salespeople can clue-in to their clients' unspoken signals, and discover what each prospect thinks, wants, and needs. While many salespeople ignore or down play these signals, they probably are selling below their potential. True sales effectiveness requires a particular application of people reading, which focuses on fulfilling both client and organizational needs (Brooks, 2006). Note there are other, less effective applications in common use, some of which give people reading a bad name, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Appendix). For example, organizationally focused people reading can be effective regardless of customer focus, depending upon the time frame. In the short-term, opportunistic people reading can produce immediate, but unsustainable financial gains while undermining longer-term customer retention. Conversely, the profitability inherent in professional relationships grows over time, and may not be compatible with short-term aggressive performance goals. Provided that the people-reading, target outcomes are aligned with organizational strategy, people reading is apt to play an increasing role in competitive decision making (Khatri & Ng, 2000). The seller's competitive mastery can be improved through accurate people reading, that is, the outer reading of another individual's or client's experience or situation. To increase the seller's competitive effectiveness and efficiency, general and specific suggestions were provided regarding how to successfully use people reading as well

as a typology and outcomes for people-reading effectiveness. In general, people-reading results can be improved by reading all the pieces of information from the other person and the situation, i.e., using one's outer-focused awareness. The competitive seller should consider all of these pieces of information as he/she looks for a nexus of truth or understanding on which to act and create a competitive advantage.

“In the new science, the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationships that exist among seemingly discrete parts. Donnella Meadows, a systems thinker, quotes an ancient Sufi teaching that captures this shift in focus: ‘You think because you understand one, you must understand two, because one and one make two. But you must also understand and.’ When we view systems from this perspective, we enter an entirely new landscape of connections, of phenomenon that cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect, and of the constant flux of dynamic processes.” (Bruskin, 1998, 248)

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Figure 1: Effective People Reading Typology

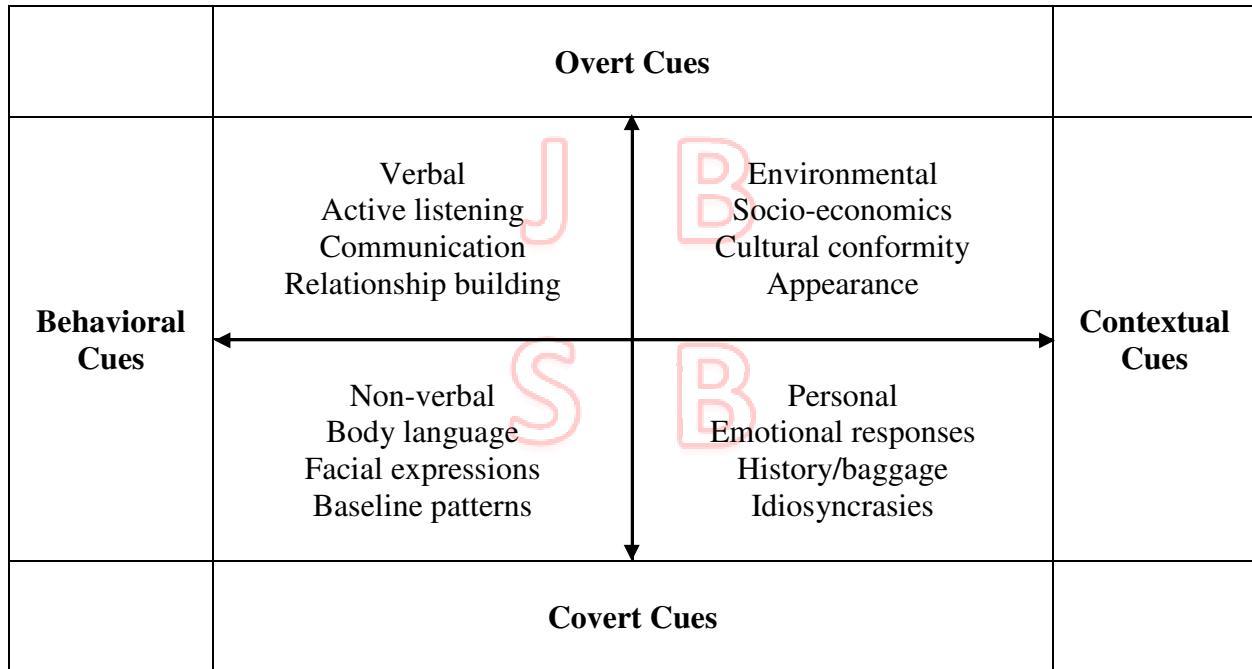
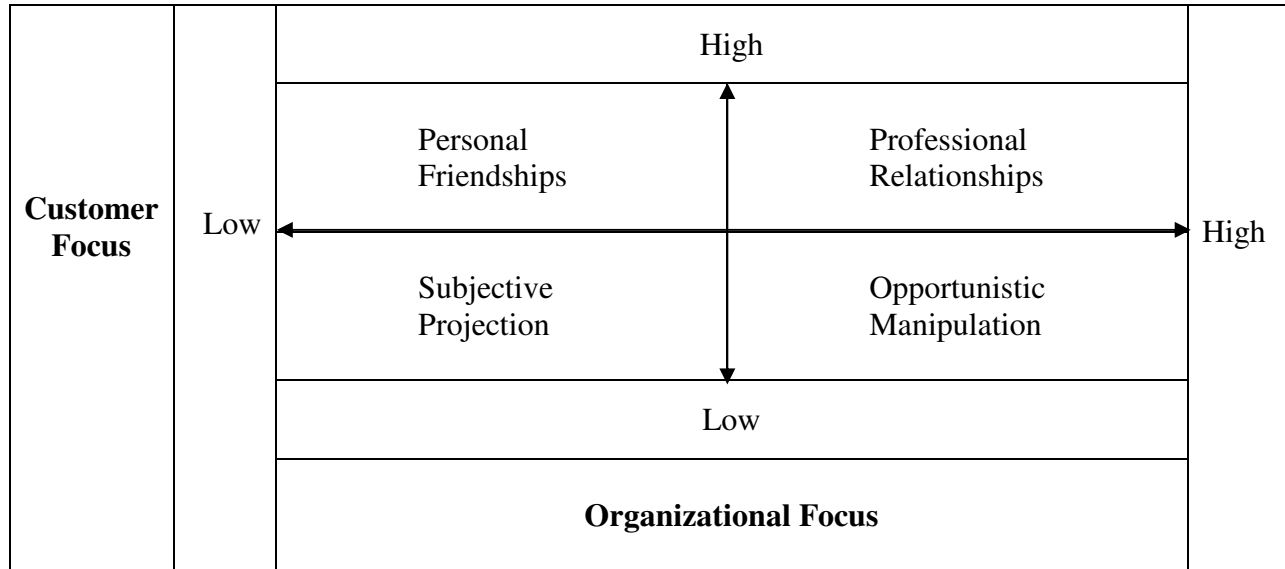


Figure 2: People Reading Outcomes



J B

S B