

How to read your prospect like a book!

Top salespeople and the most successful managers recognise the importance of non-verbal communication in the selling process and have learned to "listen with their eyes". They understand that one of the easiest and most effective ways to close sales is to be aware of the prospect's "buy signals".

 By [John Boe](#) 21 Sep 2011

Are you aware that your body language reveals your deepest feelings and hidden thoughts to total strangers? It might surprise you to know that research indicates over 70% of our communication is done non-verbally.

In fact, studies show that non-verbal communication has a much greater impact and reliability than the spoken word. Therefore, if your prospect's words are incongruent with their body language gestures, you would be wise to rely on their body language as a more accurate reflection of their true feelings. Body language is a mixture of movement, posture, and tone of voice.

The good news about this subject is that your subconscious mind already understands the meaning of every gesture, posture, and voice inflection. The bad news is, without the proper training you are unable to consciously apply this information.

Gain the competitive edge

Get started on the right foot. Research shows that we decide in the first few moments whether we like someone or not. Yes, we also judge a book by its cover too. There is absolutely no substitute for a positive first impression. Create a favorable first impression and build rapport quickly by using open body language. In addition to smiling and making good eye contact, you should show the palms of your hands, keep your arms unfolded, and your legs uncrossed.

Create harmony by "matching and mirroring" your prospect's body language gestures. Matching and mirroring is unconscious mimicry. It is a way of subconsciously telling another that you like them and agree with them. The next time you are at a social event, notice how many people are subconsciously matching one another. Likewise, when people disagree, they subconsciously mismatch their body language gesture. The psychological principle behind matching and mirroring is that people want to do business with salespeople that they believe are similar to them.

You can build trust and rapport by deliberately, but subtly, matching your prospect's body language in the first ten minutes of the appointment. For example, if you notice that your prospect is crossing their arms, subtly cross your arms to match them. After you believe you have developed trust and rapport, verify it by seeing if your prospect will match you. Uncross your arms and see if your prospect will match and mirror you as you move into a more open posture.

If you notice your prospect subconsciously matching your body language gestures, congratulations, this indicates that you have developed trust and rapport. Conversely, if you notice your prospect mismatching your body language gestures, you know trust and rapport has not been established and you need to continue matching and mirroring them.

Body language basics

Be mindful to evaluate the flow of "gesture clusters" rather than isolated gestures taken out of context. List below are some important body language gestures that you need to become familiar with.

Body postures:

There are two basic categories of body postures; Open/Closed and Forward/Back. In an open and receptive body posture, arms are unfolded, legs uncrossed, and palms are exposed. In a closed body posture, arms are folded, legs are crossed and the entire body is usually turned away.

- Leaning back and closed = Lack of interest
- Leaning back and open = Contemplation and cautious interest
- Leaning forward and closed = Potential aggressive behavior
- Leaning forward and open = Interest and agreement. If appropriate, this would be a good time to ask for the order.

Head gestures:

There are four basic head positions.

- Head neutral = Neutral and open attitude
- Tilted back = Superior attitude
- Tilted down = Negative and judgmental attitude
- Tilted to one side = Interest

Facial gestures:

Facial gestures reveal deceit, doubt, deliberation, and critical judgment.

- Eye rub = Deceit, "see no evil"
- Eye roll = Dismissive gesture that indicates superiority
- Looking over top of glasses = Scrutiny and a critical attitude
- Nose rub = Dislike of the subject
- Hand or fingers blocking mouth = Deceit, "speak no evil"
- Chin stroking = Making a decision
- Thumb under chin with index finger pointing vertically along the cheek = Negative attitude and critical judgment

Are you missing your prospect's buy signals? As a professional salesperson you must continuously monitor your prospect's body language and adjust your presentation accordingly. By understanding your prospect's body language gestures you will minimize perceived sales pressure and know when it's appropriate to close the sale!

ABOUT JOHN BOE

American John Boe presents a wide variety of motivational and sales-oriented keynotes and seminar programs for sales meetings and conventions. John is a recognized sales trainer, business motivational speaker with an impeccable track record in the meeting industry. For more information, go to www.johnboe.com. Free newsletter available on website. [View my profile and articles...](#)

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