

RELATE > REASON > RESOLVE = RESULTS™

THE MIND READER EFFECT

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If you want to meet people, you may want to consider a career in sales. Yes, salespeople meet a variety of people, and over time these connections may cause one to think that they are good at “reading” people, but is that true? According to the book, *Talking to Strangers* by Malcolm Gladwell, the reality could be just the opposite. Gladwell’s research suggests that everyone thinks they are good at interpreting others based on conversations, facial expressions, and body language. Still, we are not - and people are not as transparent as many of us believe. For example, in the book Gladwell discusses what happened in the Bernie Madoff case.

As you probably know, Madoff orchestrated the greatest Ponzi scheme in history. Over the years, how many people did he dupe? His clients included many of the world’s wealthiest and smartest people, individuals that no doubt thought that they knew Bernie Madoff, and collectively trusted him with their billions of dollars. Yet, he brazenly stole their money.

A second lesson from *Talking to Strangers* is that we default to trusting others. In other words, when we meet someone, we want to believe that what the individual is telling us is true, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary. Now you may be thinking that this means most of us are gullible, and instead, we should be suspicious about what “strangers” tell us to protect ourselves from harm. That notion seems logical, but the argument made by Gladwell is that the default to trusting is what makes our society function. Without it, we would not want to leave our homes and go about our daily affairs in an always suspicious world.

I recommend you read *Talking to Strangers* because the issues of transparency and the default to trusting strangers are directly related to sales psychology. I recognized this phenomenon firsthand years ago when several prospects that I believed were buying from me - didn’t, and ones that I thought never would - did! Figuring out what another person is thinking may seem relatively easy - you look at a person and determine what their thinking right? No,



the problem, especially with someone you just met, comes from the fact that people are very complicated. Why? Our “supercomputer” brains perform thousands of random thoughts each day. So, even an unsophisticated individual is, by nature, a complex thinker. And when it comes to communicating what they are thinking, in most cases, they don’t. And in sales, prospects are not saying what they are thinking.

As I mentioned, another takeaway from *Talking to Strangers* is that we default to trusting people, even strangers. This is very important and proves why it is imperative to spend some time in any sales situation interacting - relating - with the prospect, forming an initial bond of trust. When you build this measure of confidence, the prospect is more likely to be open to the reasoning arguments that you present as to why they should purchase your product or service. Gladwell’s research confirms my assumptions in the book *R3R1: The Sales Formula for Success* and my method, Relate>Reason>Resolve = Results™ and why this approach is the key to success in sales.

As far as “relating” goes, since we naturally default to the trust aspect of our personalities, it is imperative not only to learn something about your prospect, but also to tell them a few things about yourself. I had a very recent encounter with a salesperson trying to sell a service to my company, and she failed miserably at relating. She never told me anything about herself, and as the prospective customer, my takeaway was that she was abrupt and rude I did not like her. Was she that unpleasant of a person? Maybe not, but she didn’t attempt to develop any relationship, so I did not trust her. I realize that a salesperson may be limited in the amount of time that he or she has to deliver a presentation, and “relating” may seem unnecessary, but this is a big mistake, according to Gladwell’s account as well as other books on behavioral science.

Now what can be done to be more successful in figuring out prospects? Nothing. Give up on trying to “read” people - you won’t be successful. If, according to Gladwell, CIA agents, trained in uncovering the motives of

dangerous operatives, can’t do it consistently, why do you think you can? Instead of trying to accomplish the impossible, focus on a general assessment of individuals that have bought your product or service in the past and what they were seeking and develop reasoning methods to explain why new prospects should buy as well. Additionally, if someone acts interested in what you are selling, don’t make the mistake of neglecting to persuade them - even if you think they are already convinced. Here is why. If you convince someone who is most likely going to buy without persuasion techniques being used, it will not hurt the sale. On the other hand, if you don’t try to persuade someone who needs more convincing, you can lose the sale. You see, you can’t always tell the difference. I can’t, even after decades of selling. Why? Because I am not a mind reader. My advice? Give up on trying to read people - it is simply exhausting and distracting from your real job. It is a better idea to have a strategy of persuasion and stick with essential lines of reasoning that will move your prospects toward the finish line.