

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR CUSTOMER IS LYING

There is no nice way to say this, *some customers lie*. There, I've said it. The plain unvarnished truth—no sugar coating. Not all customers, just some. And these lies cover a broad range of topics: delivery time frames, buying authority, competitive information, and mostly price. Wouldn't it be great to have a lie-detector on a sales call? Maybe customers would appreciate that too for some salespeople.

Recently, at the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting, Dr. Alan Hirsch and a research assistant presented a paper on detecting mendacity—spotting a lie, for the rest of us. They identified twenty-seven verbal and nonverbal signs that indicate a speaker is lying. The scientific background for this work includes over sixty journal references and twenty textbook references—solid enough for me.

When I read the news report, I contacted Dr. Hirsch and received a copy of his research report. I also urged him to turn this into a book. I could see the endless possibilities for salespeople.

Dr. Hirsch categorized these signals into two categories: verbal and nonverbal signs.

The verbal signs of lying include:

- Qualifiers/modifiers: *not necessarily, but, however, almost, generally, basically.*
- Denials of lying: *frankly, obviously, to be 100% honest with you, as far as I know.*
- Speech errors: this is the old Freudian slip, changing your thoughts and details mid-stream.
- Pause-fillers: filling empty spaces with *um, er, ah, uh.*
- Stuttering: a liar gets tongue-tied, runs words together, stammers and slurs his speech.

The nonverbal signs of lying include:

- Less finger pointing,
- Lip licking,
- Lip puckering/tightening of lips,
- Increased drinking and swallowing,
- Fewer hand gestures,
- Hand-to-face grooming,
- Sighs/deep breaths,
- Hand and shoulder shrugs,
- Handling objects,
- Looking away to the side or down,
- Touching nose,
- Crossing arms,
- Closing hands into fists.

The researchers caution against making quick judgments based on one nonverbal sign. Several used by the speaker raises one's skepticism about the veracity of the speaker's message.

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