

# A super power for sales pros

A tool that trains you to identify lies, truth and emotions

BY DAN SEIDMAN

In sales training on questioning skills, I ask reps in the room to choose a super power that would help them increase their performance. It's a fun question and lets people imagine, well, unimaginable success. The answers range from invisibility ("I'll get back in the prospect's office, after my call and see what they're saying about us") to answers like these (with their reasoning, sometimes bizarre, behind the choice of power).

**Precognition** – the ability to predict the future:

*"I am not going on any call where I don't get the sale. I will be known for my 100 percent closing ratio."*

**Superhuman endurance:**

*"I can work harder, not smarter."*

**Time travel:**

*"Gonna' go back and re-do that sales call to fix what I did wrong."*

**Omnilinguism** – the ability to speak any language:

*(Me: "Dude, you looked that up. No cell phones during training!")*

**Immortality:**

*"I'll study the best salespeople, then become the best... forever."*

**Mind control:**

*"You must buy from me, nothing is more important than saying yes, right now."*

**Flying:**

*"I'm just sick of always being stuck in traffic."*

These are all too flamboyant. How about a super power that's under the radar – one that's actually possible? How about the ability to read a buyer and know if they're being truthful or deceptive – or better yet, to know which emotions they're feeling during your conversation?

That training exists and it's being used by a wide variety of professions. It's time we adapted it for the world of selling.

## Reading facial expressions

Dr. Paul Ekman has led research for decades on decoding the human face. He calls these Micro Expressions. It is clear that these expressions are universal. For example, someone in the U.S. would make the same face for sadness, as would an indigenous tribe member of the Fore people in Papua New Guinea. What's more amazing is the research shows that individuals blind from birth also make the identical expressions, even without ever having seen another face.

You've likely already experienced Ekman's work. It was the plot in the TV show "Lie to Me," where the main character was modeled after Ekman. He also worked with Disney Pixar illustrators to help them more effectively show emotions in animated characters. The hit summer movie of 2015, "Inside Out" was a beautiful example of Ekman's brilliant work.

In the law enforcement profession, his work has attained superstar status. National and global organizations that fight terrorism and other criminal activities are training staff to read faces. This



includes the CIA, FBI, INTERPOL as well as state and local police forces.

Accurately reading emotions has found its way into counseling psychology and the legal profession (judges and attorneys are absolutely looking for the truth). Even world-class poker players use these skills to give themselves an edge.

So why not salespeople? Why not now?

## 5 benefits of reading emotions

The value of learning this skill is diverse. Dr. Ekman believes there are five key benefits to getting trained:

- ✓ You can spot concealed emotions and better understand, in the moment, what the other person is experiencing.
- ✓ You can improve your emotional intelligence by not only seeing feelings in others, but by increasing awareness of your own.
- ✓ You can significantly enhance relationships, as people who spot micro expressions were better liked by co-workers.
- ✓ You can increase your capacity for empathy, and help others to feel more understood and "seen."
- ✓ You'll better understand others, even from different cultures, by recognizing these universal expressions.





How exactly does one read another's face? What are we looking for? Facial action coding system (FACS) is a method for reading Micro Expressions. This refers to a flicker of emotion that reveals a person's true feelings in a very brief moment, about 400 milliseconds or two-fifths of a second.

There are seven core emotions — fear, anger, sadness, happiness, disgust, contempt and surprise. Forty-three muscles in the face are coded.

You can become skilled at recognizing these key emotions with practice. I contacted Dr. Ekman 10 years ago, asking about offering his work to sales professionals as an elite level of training. He and his team were too busy training law enforcement to expand into the business world. So I bought his Micro Expressions training disc. It is no longer available, as the company has moved the digital training online. (They also offer in-depth live training.)

On an airplane flight with my 10-year old son, Josh, I popped the disc into a laptop and we watched these quick images (two-fifths of a second, remember) for a couple hours. We'd guess the emotion revealed and get better and better at seeing what was really going on.

Fast forward a couple months and we're in a store where the owner is arguing with an unhappy customer who made an unreasonable demand. A quick

flash ran across the owner's face and Josh and I looked at one another. "Did you see that?" I asked. "Yes, it was contempt!" Exactly! We had picked up the man's feelings about how the customer wanted to resolve the conflict.

This was a huge AHA! moment. As a sales professional who'd managed, trained, coached and consulted for almost three decades, I felt one of our biggest flaws in selling was poor listening skills. Now I know that it's more than that. We need the skill of paying attention. So listen, ask great questions and observe your buyer's response, both verbal and facial.

### A built-in lie detector

Can you imagine the power that comes with building your skills in identifying lies, truth and emotions? I spoke with Cliff Lansley of the Emotional Intelligence Academy. He is Ekman's partner and runs their global training out of Manchester, England.

Lansley said according to the science of deception, we understand that lies are linked to emotions. They require greater cognitive effort than the truth (in other words, it takes work to make up a story and keep the other person from seeing behind it). Also, liars over-control their behaviors. This extra effort gets exposed when one has the ability to read that flicker of "emotional leakage" in the other person's face.

Lansley also points out there are actually six communication channels that reveal a person's feelings. A single clue is not enough to judge what is really going on. As he puts it, "There is no Pinocchio's nose. We want to understand what we are really seeing and hearing, so we can make reliable, informed, intelligent judgements about how we can respond. The steps in

Test yourself on some of the approaches used in the courses by the Emotional Intelligence Academy at [www.eiagroup.com/facetool](http://www.eiagroup.com/facetool).

the process are simply put this way: awareness, understanding, influence."

In sales situations, we need to choose how to respond to what we see, hear and now know. Based on each situation, our influence might take the conversation down a different path. At times, you may hold back that information to use later (perhaps while you gather more data on the buyer). Or you might gently mention the emotion in the context of the sale. Say you're discussing a problem that really hurt the employee or the company and that person flashes sadness on her face. You might say, "It's sad this is affecting your firm this way." You're showing true empathy and creating a healthier connection. This is truly selling smarter.

### Practice to perform

All of this amazing new learning is taken quite seriously in the academic world. There are two universities in Europe that offer master's degrees in behavioral analysis. Lansley is beginning discussions with U.S. schools to offer programs here as well.

The key to attaining mastery is practice. Whether you go to school, train digitally or attend three-day workshops, you must hone your skills by investing time in your newly discovered abilities. It's no different than what any salesperson seeking to attain excellence and performance improvement would do with sales training or coaching of any kind.

Lies, truth and emotion training is a real thing that we can learn and use. Instead of fantasizing about our future, we can control that future and attain greatness on our team, our company and our industry. **SMN**

Dan Seidman of GOT INFLUENCE? is the author of "Ultimate Guide to Sales Training." He received the International Sales Training Leader of the Year in 2013. Dan would like your feedback, especially after you've had a chance to play with some of the emotion training videos.

Contact Dan at [Dan@GotInfluenceInc.com](mailto:Dan@GotInfluenceInc.com) or visit [www.GotInfluence.com](http://www.GotInfluence.com).