

What are Your Eyes Saying During a Sales Meeting?

Recently I asked a cross section of salespeople how they would rate their eye contact on a scale from poor to great. Every response was either good or great. This was immediately followed by “Why the question?”

I asked them to bear with me and respond to another four questions. The criteria were unless each question was answered with a definitive “Yes” followed by what they do, then it is “No.”

1. Are you aware where you look when speaking to a client?
2. Are you aware where you look when listening to a client?
3. Do you know how long you maintain eye contact whilst speaking or listening?
4. Are you aware how often you look away whilst speaking or listening?

The outcome was every salesperson was unable to answer any of the four questions with a single “Yes.” It created interesting conversations motivating them to re-evaluate their initial good and great answers.

Ask yourself the same questions. It can feel quite grounding not to have answers.

When you feel confident it is natural to look into a client's eyes, but if you feel uncomfortable or under pressure eye contact is avoided. The **behaviour happens at a subconscious level** and automatically attracts matching body language and vocal tone. This projects a verbal and non-verbal image that is counter to creating a successful sales outcome.

Eye Traits That Distract

When a client is distracted, they stop listening to you and listen to their internal dialog.

1. **Staring** – The length and intensity of eye contact creates client ill-ease
2. **Eye dart** – Eyes move rapidly from one area to another. Appearance of nervousness
3. **Eye fastening** – A spot is chosen, example the upper body, and it is spoken to
4. **Floor gazing** – The impression can be shyness, avoidance, or untrustworthiness
5. **Delayed eye blink** – Eyes are closed for extended periods as if to search for information. It can project aloofness.

Broadly there are three types of eye contact:

1. Intimate – These are close personal relationships
2. Intimidation – Aggressiveness, forcefulness, controlling
3. Involvement – The client feels totally engaged. You ‘*speak to their eyes.*’

Eye Contact Involvement

In face-to-face sales situations natural eye contact is between five to ten seconds before looking away, then returning. When addressing a group, three to six seconds with everyone is ideal.

Practice your eye contact with a colleague and use a stopwatch. Time the maximum ten seconds. If you feel uncomfortable it could be a sign you need to extend your eye contact.

Being consciously competent with eye contact will impact on your self-confidence, help you to relate, relax, respond, and emotionally involve your client.



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