

Title: Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking
Author: Malcolm Gladwell
Publisher: New York: Little Brown and Company
Pages: 265
Price: U.S. \$25.95
ISBN: 0-316-17232-4
Reading Time: 6 hours
Reading Rating: (1=difficult, 10 = easy): 8
Overall Rating: (1 = average; 4 = outstanding): 3

As described on the inside of the jacket cover, "*Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant -- in the blink of an eye -- that actually aren't as simple as they seem." The book gives many examples of folks who can make these instinctual good decisions in various settings: the music business, sports, antiquities, speed dating, marriage counseling; it gives examples of incidents in which "blink" decisions were made in error, such as the "New Coke" marketing decision made by the Coca Cola Company and the tragic killing of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx.

Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error?" The many examples given make the reader want to know how those successful blink thinkers do it – can people train themselves to become effective blink thinkers?

According to Gladwell, the blink thinker can "thin-slice" the scenario, filter out the unnecessary information, and focus on the few correct important factors needed to make a good decision -- all within the first two seconds of looking at a situation, a person or an object. Less input, as long as it is the right input, is better than more information as input. This is reliance on what he calls the "adaptive unconscious," trusting our instincts and experience to detect danger or size up a situation. This is not the "light bulb" reaction of knowing: rather, it is more of a flickering candle of understanding.

Gladwell also describes the "dark side of blink," the many ways in which our instincts, our first impressions, and our tendency to leap to conclusions can be manipulated. Marketers know high arousal moments make us focus on the wrong cues, leaving us "mind blind." He gives the example of the "Warren Harding Effect," an emotional public voting for a handsome candidate who turned out to be an ineffectual president.

The author, Malcolm Gladwell, is currently a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. He was formerly a business and science reporter at *The Washington Post*. The reader who enjoys *Blink* will also enjoy reading his book *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell is a writer with great psychological insights into some of the serious business interactions in the world. His books give us a series of surprising but narrow glimpses into personal and organizational psychology. They are fast, easy reads, with many anecdotes and examples.

The book is fascinating to read and it does, as it claims to do, make you think about thinking and gives you insight into your own decision-making process. Applying the principles upon which Gladwell writes the book, David Brooks of *The New York Times Book Review* said, "If you want to trust my snap judgment, buy this book: you'll be delighted. If you want to trust my more reflective second judgment, buy it: you'll be delighted but frustrated, troubled and left wanting more."

For a "Q & A with Malcolm" and to find excerpts from the *Blink* "The Second Mind," "Why Do We Love Tall Men," and "The Mysteries of Mind-Reading," go to <http://www.gladwell.com/blink/index.html>.

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