

Book Review on

“Blink”

‘The Power of Thinking Without Thinking’
by Malcolm Gladwell

(Review by Gary Tomlinson)

Business Leader Magazine – November 2006 Issue

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? How do our brains really work – in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? For the answers to these questions, I’ve chosen Malcolm Gladwell’s *Blink – The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* for this month’s book review.

In his landmark bestseller, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink* he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *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. There are lots of books that tackle broad themes that analyze the world from great remove. This is not one of them. *Blink* is concerned with the very smallest components of our everyday lives – the content and origin of those instantaneous impressions and conclusions that spontaneously arise whenever we meet a new person or confront a complex situation or have to make a decision under conditions of stress.

Gladwell says that we live in a world that assumes the quality of a decision is directly related to the time and effort that went into making it. When doctors are faced with a difficult diagnosis, they order more tests, and when we’re uncertain about what we hear, we ask for a second opinion. And what do we tell our children? Haste makes waste. Look before you leap. Stop and think. Don’t judge a book by its cover. We believe that we are always better off gathering as much information as possible and spending as much time in deliberation. We really only trust conscious decision making. But Gladwell says there are moments, particularly in times of stress, when haste does not make waste, when our snap judgments and first impressions can offer a much better means of making sense of the world.

The first task of *Blink* is to convince you of a simple fact: decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as decisions made cautiously and deliberately. So, when should we trust our instincts, and when should we be wary of them? Answering that question is the second task of *Blink*. When our powers of rapid cognition go awry, they go awry for a very specific and consistent set of reasons, and those reasons can be identified and understood. Gladwell believes it’s possible to learn when to listen to that powerful onboard computer and when to be wary of it. The third and most important task of *Blink* is to convince you that our snap judgments and first impressions can be educated and

controlled. Just as we can teach ourselves to think logically and deliberately, Gladwell says we can also teach ourselves to make better snap judgments.

In *Blink* you'll read about doctors and generals and coaches and furniture designers and musicians and countless others, all of whom are very good at what they do and all of whom owe their success, at least in part, to the steps they have taken to shape and manage and educate their unconscious reactions. The power of knowing, in that first two seconds, is not a gift given magically to a fortunate few. Gladwell says it is an ability that we can all cultivate for ourselves.

Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology *Blink* changes the way you'll understand every decision you make. Gladwell believes and hopes that by the end of his book you'll believe it as well – that the task of making sense of ourselves and our behavior requires that we acknowledge there can be as much value in the blink of an eye as there is in months of rational analysis. After reading his book, never again will you think about thinking the same way!

Enjoy this month's selection, *Blink – The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; “*The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.*”