

The logo features a blue parallelogram tilted to the right, containing the words "Brass Tacks" in orange and "Tip Sheet" in yellow with a black outline. The text is positioned to the right of the parallelogram.

Brass Tacks Tip Sheet

Intuition: Learn how to use your seventh sense

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Over two hundred years ago, the Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, an English statesman and man of letters, exclaimed: "We, my lords, may thank Heaven that we have something better than our brains to depend on." Most probably he was referring to intuition, that ethereal ability possessed by everyone but used by few.

Intuition is a capacity to formulate effective insights, expectations or courses of action without having all of the facts, and without having performed a complete analysis of the prevailing situation. It's accumulated knowledge, buried away in our subconscious. Occasionally it bubbles up to our consciousness where it can be put to work. It is important stuff but, unfortunately, it's stuck back in the recesses of our psyche along with our dreams. Consequently, it can't be called up at will like deliberately filed and indexed memories.

Most of us have probably experienced flashes of this perceptivity from time to time but chalked them off to luck or accident.

This underused personal "talent" can offer a manager or entrepreneur a critical edge in today's frenetic marketplace. Unfortunately, reacting to "gut feelings" is not held in high regard in most corporations or in the institutions of higher learning that prepare their operatives. Therefore, it's our personal responsibility to pick up this creative cudgel and use it as often as we can.

Our reluctance to stick our necks out in this fashion is derived from our lack of familiarity with intuitive power. Accordingly, here is a **BrassTacks TipSheet** that offers suggestions for facilitating circumstances in which your intuitive power can be called forth and productively applied.

Believe in it: Our beliefs about our capabilities determine what we, indeed, can do. It is important, therefore to learn as much as we can about intuition and how it can be exploited. Among the better books on this topic are [Awakening Intuition](#) by Frances E. Vaughn (Anchor Press/Doubleday) and [Practical Intuition](#) by Laura Day (Villard Books/Random House). It's sometimes difficult to counter Sgt. Friday's universally accepted dictum --"Just the facts, mam" -- but, to seize the competitive advantage, we must learn to supplement the traditional analytical tools that can take us just so far. To accomplish this we have to identify the beliefs we have that block intuitive activity and get rid of them. Sometimes your intuition might even go against what your own reason tells you is right. In these cases, trust bred of good experience is particularly important.

Track your success: Take note of when your hunches pay off; compile a record of evidence over the long term. Post-hunch verification and testing is important. Make an effort to remember those times when you "just knew something" that later turned out to be true. Good experiences will reinforce your propensity to "trust your gut." Over time they will also suggest the kinds of circumstances that are most conducive to the effective use of your intuition.

Experiment: Grab every opportunity to test your hunches even in situations where the outcome is not central to what you are doing. These are "freebies," chances to gauge your intuition without risking a serious negative consequence. Observe day-to-day events and activities of others,

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mentally speculating about what will happen. Then score your hunches. These harmless exercises will give you feedback about what works for you and what doesn't.

Learn the signals: Be sensitive to the clues your body gives to its readiness to make a successful intuitive leap. People have reported all kinds of signs, e.g. hair standing up on the back of the neck, goose bumps, sweaty palms, a churning tummy, a tiny "voice," rapid eye blinking, even visions flashed on the inside of the forehead. Zero in on these bridges between your conscious and subconscious. They can increase your batting average considerably.

Drop the barriers: It has been shown that while a person can remember about 50,000 words, phrases or chess moves, he can't remember more than seven unrelated things at a time. So if you want your intuition to ascend into your right brain consciousness you have to give it room. Clear out the clutter of currently pressing issues. Look beyond the immediate crisis. Relax, get comfortable, create a "blank screen" on which your third hand can write. Practice maintaining an open-minded, experimental, non-judgmental attitude. Daydreaming is good. Wait for the missing piece of the puzzle to "pop up." Drop any barriers to your receptivity to impulse or spontaneous stimuli. While it would be difficult to maintain this posture exclusively for 24-hours a day, set aside times when you try not to think; pay attention to what "comes up," and then discipline yourself to act accordingly. Many people find that their most creative moments revolve around sleep time, i.e. just before retiring, upon arising or in the middle of the night when intuition is "closest to the surface." So review your notes or business papers right before you go to sleep and let your subconscious have at it. Keep paper and pencil on your nightstand so you can record your flashes of insight when they occur.

While intuition should not totally supplant other, more deliberate, analytical forms of decision making, it can be used as a very potent supplement, one that can give your firm a critical edge over its left-brain driven competitors. Indeed, a study by psychologists at the Universities of Virginia and Pittsburgh concluded that people who listen to their intuition and don't analyze their decisions in depth often make better choices, at least about their own lives. Stay tuned!

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Brass Tacks Definition: "Getting down to brass tacks" *adv phr fr early 1900's* Dealing with the essentials; concerned with the immediate practical realities. *Webster.*