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Magic in Mind and the Short Con

Over at [Mind Hacks](#), one of my favourite non legal blogs, Tom Stafford writes about the [connection between magic and cognitive science](#):

"Interest in the cognitive science of magic is really hotting up with Nature Neuroscience having just published a review article jointly authored by some leading cognitive scientists and stage illusionists.

They argue that by studying magic, neuroscientists can learn powerful methods to manipulate attention and awareness in the laboratory which could give insights into the neural basis of consciousness itself.

The neuroscientists involved are Stephen Macknik and Susana Martinez-Conde, while the magicians are Mac King, James Randi, Apollo Robbins, Teller from Penn and Teller, and John Thompson."

I admit to skepticism about the overall utility of this project because I have grown to distrust the metaphor of illusion underwriting cognitive errors - although it certainly would be fun to attend these seminars!

But, I was jolted out of my complacency reading Chapter 1 of Benson Smith's [Discover Your Sales Strengths: How the World's Greatest Salespeople Develop Winning Careers](#), see one explicit link between magic and the short con.

In Chapter 1, Benson Smith describes a remarkable short con. A boy bets you he can tell exactly where you got your shoes. The boy knows nothing about you, your background, and your are a stranger to him.

He wins the bet. How does he do it?

Misdirection is the key - think about it for a while, and then run over to Amazon and read the answer at [Discover Your Sales Strengths: How the World's Greatest Salespeople Develop Winning Careers](#).

—Related articles by Zemanta—

- [Magic teaches us about human cognition](#)
- [Brain Magic and Neuroscience](#)
- [Nature Neuroscience article on neurological basis for magic, co-written by Teller of Penn and Teller](#)
- [Fun book: The Modern Con Man -- How to Get Something for Nothing](#)
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