

# Neuroeconomics: How Brain Science Matters to Business

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## ***Forbes:***

At first glance, a neuroscientist and a business school might seem an odd fit. But in fact economists have been paying increasing attention to how the brain works. Christine Looser discusses her research on how the brain detects aliveness — and the possible implications for organizations and advertisers — in this article by Carmen Nobel, which first appeared on the HBS Working Knowledge website.

Humans are often delighted by objects with *vaguely* humanoid characteristics—think Pet Rocks, toy robots, or sock puppets. But there is a point at which an object looks almost human, yet not quite human enough, and the result is disturbing. It's called the uncanny valley. And for Christine Looser, it's the starting point for a line of research aimed at discovering how our brains detect life, and how we distinguish the cognizant from the mindless.

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To determine the point at which humans recognize the impression of life, or animacy, in a face, Looser conducted a series of experiments in cooperation with her PhD advisor at Dartmouth College, psychology professor Thalia Wheatley. (They detail their findings in *The Tipping Point of Animacy: How, When, and Where We Perceive Life in a Face*, published in the December 2010 issue of *Psychological Science*.)

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