

## Who's Making Money Now? Psychics.

Written by Jeffrey Wagg

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According to Wired News, things are good for those with "gifts." The author, Ryan Singel, apparently interviewed a few "psychics" and asked them to report. Troubled investors have been turning in droves to so-called online "psychics" to advise them on what to do during these difficult economic times. I'm not terribly surprised by this "news," but the article itself has a few interesting points for discussion.

I'm disappointed to see what category this story was filed under. If you look at the top of the page or the complete URL, you'll see it's part of Wired's section entitled "Science" and then subsection "Discoveries." If you look at the "Science" section, the only subsections are "Discoveries," "Planet Earth" and "Space." And a quick perusing of the articles there shows a lot of good content. I would suggest this article would better belong in their "Culture" section, as there is no science or discovery within. Although, there is this paragraph which I suppose is why they classified it as they did:

The boom in superstition is a predictable response to troubling times, says Columbia Business School professor Gita Johar, who's studied the phenomenon. "If the future is uncertain, people turn to psychics," Johar says. Consumers tend to embrace the supernatural when confronted by stress, combined with uncertainty. "You have an illusion then that you can then control the outcome. People want the illusion of control."

Again, this is not surprising, but I would have liked to read more about Gita Johar's study, and there wasn't even a link to it. A little research reveals that Gita studies consumer psychology, and many of her papers and articles are available [here](#), though I couldn't find one directly related to this topic.

What links were there? Two links involving the JREF Challenge: [Cryptographer Solves Psychic Challenge](#) and [Skeptic Revamps \\$1M Psychic Prize](#) and another Wired article involving voter superstitions.

The rest of the article is dedicated to quotes from a few online psychics, and despite the article's title, "In Troubling Economic Times, Consumers Flock to Online Psychics" one of the psychics says that business has been down. In fact, despite saying that "internet psychics across the board saw a spike in traffic in the days following the initial market crash," in fact he only cites

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three "psychics," and only two of those reported higher sales. Could this be attributed to marketing or some other factor? We don't know; there was apparently no research done into that aspect. Based on this, even though it seems obvious, the conclusion that the online psychic business is booming isn't well supported.

Don't get me wrong: I'm a fan and longtime subscriber to *Wired*. I see it as a magazine of the Internet culture which is a strange co-mingling of science, gadgetry, and new ways of living. I just think this particular article missed out on some opportunities.

It's also interesting to note that this article is making its way through many of the paranormal sites, apparently as a piece of "good" news. I wonder how many of them will focus on Gita's key word in all of this: "illusion." Alas, it's not only the paranormal sites who are repeating this "news." This article on [smartmoney.com](http://smartmoney.com) links to it in the "Read Me" section.