

# The Weekly Sales Beast

## Johnny Obvious and Other Sales Illusions.

What is obvious to one may be oblivious to another. Such was the case when my next-door neighbor Wolf asked to borrow my green handled pliers. Yes, that's his real name. As good neighbors go, I had no concern about the return of my 4-dollar household tool, I was however concerned over the fact that I didn't have a pair of green handled pliers. He was emphatic, insisting he'd seen them and even knew which drawer they were in. He brushed past me and went straight for the utility cabinet and triumphantly removed my red handled pliers.

After a short discussion about what colors are what, the only obvious conclusion I could come to was that Wolf was colorblind. As it was clear we were both looking at the same thing and each seeing something different. Naturally, it would never occur to me that it may be possible that I was the one who was colorblind.

Our vantage point is typically the one we think is correct, accurate and obvious to others we think are looking at the same thing. Often, in business, what we are focusing on with clients is a point, an idea or a concept. Not a tangible pair of pliers. And the opportunity for different viewpoints to come creeping in is enormous. To effectively service a customer, we need to see what they see. And if you could have a momentary out-of-body experience and take a glance at what the customer is envisioning you may be a little more than surprised they are not seeing exactly the same thing you are. In doing so, you would immediately begin clarifying what was obvious to you, but for your clients, not-so-much.

Unless you happen to be the "Amazing Kreskin" the only way you are going to see what's inside the head of your prospect is to have them explain to you, what they are seeing. Open-ended questions directed specifically at the customers perceptions to a specific point, will begin to reveal what they are really formulating in their minds. I know you are already a pro at questioning and use the skill artfully. But likely more to reveal needs than to affirm interpretations. The guided questioning process we normally imply is too often missed when things or statements are obvious to us. And that, my friends, is the danger zone. You are talking about red pliers and the customer sees green, but because the common denominator is pliers, it slides through. And everything is hunky dory until the customer calls and asks why you shipped a boxcar of red pliers.

Solicited feedback across the sales platform exposes the nuances of slightly different viewpoints, which if undetected can later cause issues. And forges a clarity with customers that is indisputable. Unlike the seemingly endless examples of miscommunications, words taken out of context and countless "Let me explain" recantations on the nightly news, we simply cannot afford to be in any situation in which our paying clientele has even a slightly different view than we do.

You may be thinking that asking, "so David, you see red pliers, right?" is embarrassing and beneath you. That such questions would insult the intelligence of your customer. It won't if it's framed professionally and I can assure you, it will be appreciated.

“So David, I’ve looked at this forest so often, it’s sometime hard for me to see the trees. Perhaps you could share with me your view of what’s been presented, to ensure we are both seeing the pine cones”. Insulting? I think not.

The illusion that we left the presentation with a complete and mutual understanding happens far more than we’d be willing to admit. And too often it’s the dangling obvious that was never verified with the customer that hangs the positive decisions out of our grasp. Sales is a risk management exercise of ensuring we’ve eliminated any and every possibility of not being chosen. Why chance even a small risk by not confirming viewpoints?

Let me plant this seed. We talk about closing ratio in the selling world a lot. Every sector has a number they feel is acceptable and the super stars are generally a few points higher. Let’s call it 20% of every presentation nets a piece of business. We take our one-in-five and move on to ferret out more prospects. But here’s the number no one ever identifies. Of the 80% that didn’t close, how many were 90% sold, but something just didn’t connect or add up for them? What percentage of deals might have closed but didn’t? What if it was an insignificant 5%? That would raise your closing ration by another 4%-probably not chump change, and may explain the anomaly of the super-stars you know. We too easily dismiss the sales that were close to the pile that never had a chance. Bundling them up into the acceptable percentage of non-closeable calls. There is gold in that 80% and it’s easier to mine than looking for a new rock to crack.

Every edge you can muster will give you incremental success in the marketplace and a seasoned skill of “seeing what customers see” will give you that advantage.

It’s the small obvious things that foil big deals.



**Please Note:**

The samples provided are intended to give a representation of the style and presentation of the learning points that comprise The Weekly Sales Beast Program. Their use is for the determination of the potential effectiveness this program would have on either yourself or your company sales force.