



No Means Know

By Daniel H. Chinitz

It was a quiet day at our showroom; the phones were only ringing occasionally and the freshly vacuumed carpeting remained smooth from footprints. And then I heard it...the automatic bell on our showroom door just proclaimed a visitor had arrived.

I peered out the office window to take a look. Didn't recognize them; probably a first time visitor. I always stay in the office for a minute or two to give them a little time to acclimate. We don't want to come on too strong and put them on the defensive as soon as they walk in.

Then the phone rang; it's a customer looking to check on an order. I didn't want the potential new sale to walk around too long without being welcomed so I ask the caller if they could give me a little time and I would call them back within an hour. I wrote down their name along with a fast note as a reminder on my legal pad. I learned a long time ago not to rely on my memory and to not plaster my desk with those little sticky notes that can get easily covered up or lost. Then I take a walk out into the showroom to greet my potential customer.

They're a young couple with a baby. He is dressed very casually, almost to the point of looking like he just finished cutting the grass. She is dressed well with a lovely necklace and a nice ring on the finger. I wonder if they have money. But I've learned not to judge by age or looks as you never know. They were stopped in front of our top-of-the-line vanity display.

I approach with a smile and said "That company can build anything you want. Custom sizing and design is their specialty." We determined at one of our staff meetings to never ask "Can I help you?" We wanted conversation, not a brush off. I also make sure to look at both of them, not just the guy. We learned at a seminar how important it is to treat everyone equally.

"I'll bet it costs a pretty penny" the husband answers. She doesn't say anything but is busy testing the drawers. "It definitely costs more than what home centers sell but you get a lot for your money" I respond. He nods but says nothing so I introduce myself and welcome them to our showroom. "Have you been in before?" I ask. The lady looks up from picking up the baby's toy that just bounced off the furniture. "No, this is our first visit. I've driven by your place a million times but never found the time to stop."

"Well, I can see you've been busy" I answer looking at her baby. I'm actually thinking that I am sure glad to be past the baby stage in my life but I keep my happy face on. "Are you working with a builder?" "Yes" the husband answers. "Do you know John Smith Contracting?"

I don't know the name but ask for his information. Luckily I have my tablet with me so it's not a big deal to take some notes. I'll be sure to call this builder up to see if he would like to come in and join our growing family of contractors that we partner with. I explain

how we work to this nice young couple as we always have some key points we want to get across at the beginning of the sale. We have periodic staff meetings to fine tune our approach techniques.

“I’ll be sure to call Mr. Smith to see if we can all work together. Is it your main bath that you want to remodel?” “They both say “Yes!” at the same time and laugh. “We just bought this house in New Town and the hall bath is a wreck. The master bath isn’t much better but we can live with that one for now. But the hall bath is embarrassing. It’s not that big but we’ve done a little drawing.” She pulls out her sketch with measurements and apologizes for how it looks.

“Actually this is very detailed and well done. You should see what I usually get to work with” I say while studying her work. It’s always nice to toss out a compliment now and then. “It looks like you will need a vanity; do you want furniture or cabinetry?” We love asking that question. At one of our staff meetings we determined that was a good question to get the conversation going about the difference in order to increase our chances of selling the better merchandise. After she worked the drawers in our top quality display I showed her our next level down piece so she could compare. She picked up on the quality difference right away.

“You bought in a great neighborhood and this level of product is appropriate for your area. Folks in your town usually buy based on quality and value. How long do you think you will stay in the house?” I asked. This got the conversation over to quality vs. price and allowed me to figure in what we called our “30 Second Sales Pitch.” It starts like this:

“We’ve been in this business a long time and strive to deliver the best value around. May I give you our 30 second sales pitch?” I ask with a smile. This always gets a little laugh but we like to ask permission first before launching into our “why buy from us” pitch. The client tends to listen better. We like to give them a few solid reasons to use us instead of the price choppers and internet companies. Again, we figured this all out over a few staff meetings. The goal is to make them nervous to buy elsewhere by talking value versus having the lowest price.

But then it turns out she didn’t really like the display vanity all that much. She was starting to walk over to one of our cheaper lines. We discussed how to handle that at a staff meeting too. “What don’t you like about it?” I asked to bring her back to our top shelf vanity. She frowned a little at it and commented that she didn’t like the color or the fact that it had legs. “Dust gets under there and I have enough to clean without having to deal with what’s under the vanity every day” she said.

Of course this gave me the opportunity to let them know that the piece came in their choice of 35 finishes and the piece could be built to the floor. “Plus we can add a kick space type design to the bottom so you can get your feet underneath to get even closer to the mirror or bath cabinet. And that way the bottom won’t have scuff marks you have to

constantly clean off.” She really liked that idea. Usually when a customer says “no” they just need to “know” more.

The baby was getting restless and they were making signals that it was time to move on. We made an appointment for them to return when they could get a sitter as I keep my calendar on the tablet. We agreed at our last staff meeting to never leave the office without it. Now I had time to talk to their builder, get him on our team and pick his brain about the job to see what else I might need to know. I walked them to the door, thanked them for coming in and told them I looked forward to their next visit.

The automatic doorbell signaled their departure as I started to return to the office. The note on my legal pad reminded me to find out about that other customer’s order. Plus I wanted to get a sketch done of the vanity I had in mind for my new customers. They’re going to need to “know” a little more.

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