

Perception – Sandbox Wisdom

I have a story for you that comes out of a great book called “Sandbox Wisdom”. A gentleman named Tom Asacker wrote the book (www.sandboxwisdom.com). There’s a cute story in there that I shall just paraphrase. It is about a young girl who is out driving around their small town with her grandfather one day. She asks her grandfather if they can stop and buy some candy. The grandfather agreed, so they drive downtown to find the candy store. The grandfather pulls up downtown and to his surprise, there’s a candy store on the right side, and a candy store on the left side of the street. So the grandfather asks his granddaughter, “Which store do you kids go to get your candy?” And, she says, “We always go to the one on the right side of the street, because she gives us extra candy.” And, he says, “What about the one on the left side of the street?” “Oh, we don’t go in there, she takes candy away from us.” The grandfather thought that was kind of odd, but proceeded to pull over in front of the store of his granddaughters choosing.

He orders a half pound of hard candy, and the nice lady takes a small scoop of the candy and puts it up on the scale. She then reaches in to the bin and she grabs small handfuls of candy, and puts them up on the scale to bring it up to a half pound. She takes that candy, dumps it into a bag, and hands it to the young girl with a smile, and they left the store. The grandfather, out of curiosity, decides to go across the street and go to the other candy store to see what that place was like. He walks in, orders half pound of the exact same hard candy. The lady seemed very nice too as she took a big scoop of the hard candy and put it up on the scale. She then reached up onto the scale and grabbed small handfuls of the candy to remove them from the scale in order to bring it down to half a pound. Now, did anybody do anything wrong? Of course not, but look at the different perceptions that were created by their actions.

Let’s say you walk into a bookkeeper’s office and you are looking around trying to decide if you want to give this person your income taxes to do. You see half opened boxes all over the floor, stacks of files placed vicariously on top of file cabinets and counters, and their desk is heaped with paperwork, coffee cups and lunch debris. Your perception might be that this person is disorganized (and rightly so). Are you going to hand somebody your income tax that might disorganize your stuff? Of course not!

I’m going to ask you; what is it that you do every day in your job or your task that creates misperceptions about some of the things that you’re doing? I’m going to ask you to stand back and take a look at your place of business, and look at the exterior and surrounding area. Are there cigarette butts, pop cans, paper and other debris in the parking lot that have gone unnoticed? Does the outside of the building look tired, run down and un-maintained? Did a tree that you planted 10 years grow up and cover the sign to your business? What do all of these things mean to your customers? Could they perceive that your lack of attention to detail could be reflective in your business performance as well? Perception, even though it may not always be reality, is “our” reality.