

Perception is Reality ... Therefore, I'm a Pig ...

© 2008 by William Douglas Little, Inc.

Advertising 101 teaches us that the number one rule in advertising and marketing is, “perception is reality”. What a person believes to be true - is true – if only within their mind. Show a child a picture of a red square, but teach her that it is called a blue circle ... what happens? You get a really screwed-up kid who will argue until he’s blue in the face, (red in the face?), that blue is red and squares are circles.

I’m reminded of the High School days – those wonderful years when our only real responsibilities were homework, feeding the dog and earning enough money to feed some broken clunker with gas. (In my world, the homework was pretty much the dog’s only food and gas was around 69-cents per gallon).

When you think about it, perception plays no greater role in our lives than during High School. For one thing, most of us actually *perceived* our lives to be difficult, (hindsight shows us how wrong we were). More importantly, however, was others *perception* of us, which allowed us to be placed into a pecking order clique. Here it was “Redneck”, “Jock”, “Preppy”, “Partier”, “Outcast” and, for a time, “Skate Punk”. Those of us who relied on a twisted sense of humor to earn friends in every category ultimately found ourselves gaining another *perceived* title ... that of “Troublemaker”. I’ve personally been awarded credit for pulling many more pranks than I actually did, but each new teacher had the stink-eye focused on me from day one. Eventually they all learned to love me for the angel that I really was, of course.

Anyway, being the self-proclaimed expert on perception, you’d think that I’d have seen last Thursday’s debacle coming. We were all excited to watch the Eagle’s final home game and as the points immediately began to add up, I was glued to the action. Somewhere in the second quarter, my kids finally talked me into getting some popcorn, so I hurriedly escorted them to the snack stand, hoping to miss as little game as possible. As the kids and I stepped to the counter to order, (my wife quietly guarded our 50-yardline piece of rough concrete), I ordered two popcorns, two waters for the kids, two bottles of Pepsi, (“what’s in the square, red bottle, daddy?”), and an order of nachos.

With the cache of easily spilled items on the counter, I paid for my food and was obviously considering the logistics of transport when Theresa, (a long-time friend and one of the nicest people on the planet), suggested that she could give me a box for carrying. I immediately agreed, figuring the odds of a four-year old successfully carrying nachos to our destination were somewhat slim. I handed down the waters to waiting hands and, when I looked back up, I saw that Theresa had found a box. It was large enough to house a small refrigerator, but a box nonetheless.

I quickly piled the food and bottles of Pepsi into the giant cardboard crate where their swallowed appearance made the box's size seem even more ridiculous. With a shrug of my shoulders I thanked my friend and we worked our way back through the crowd, (performing a slalom between every member of the entire marching band as they exited the bleachers for their halftime gig), and worked our way back to our seats. It wasn't until I heard a friend call out from midway up the bleachers, "Hey, looks like you brought enough for all of us", that I realized there was a break in the action on the field. The full attention of the audience was now focused on the tall guy toting a box of groceries large enough to make Wal-Mart jealous. "Yup, I bought 'em out", was my reply ... or something stupid like that.

We sat back down and I wrestled with the giant storage bin until all of the consumables were devoured, (mostly by me). Not long after, the kids grew tired and cold. Unfortunately, it's hard to sneak out of a game early when you're carrying cargo, but I'm the type to dispose of my trash when I leave a place. Therefore, I lugged the giant box before the crowd once again, (I think I knocked off someone's ball cap and nearly bumped an elderly lady over the rail), then kindly placed it on top of a trashcan, since it was too large to fit inside.

As embarrassing as the display was, I had hoped that it would soon be forgotten. The next day, however, my wife called me laughing. Apparently she had run into a local doctor friend of ours who commented on my "box of food being large enough for a village of eight" or something like that. I chuckled at the news, but in my mind I realized that good old SHS had just taught me a lesson in perception once again.

After all, it's not the amount of food, but the size of the box that people remember ... and perception *is* reality.

Oink!