

Black dialogue is NS written, blue is given text.

Alex Lewis, 41, Account Manager (18 years at Company), married with two children.

Abe Rollins, 55, Senior Account Manager (27 years at Company, former Viet vet), married with four grown children, last in college at home.

Alex: Thanks for meeting with me, Abe.

Abe: My pleasure, Alex, but I only have 10 minutes, and then I have to take a call. So, what's up?

Alex: Well, it's about one of the clients I just took over from you, Wanda at Sunsky Food Stores.

Abe: Ah yes, excellent customer. Sweet as can be.

Alex: Really? She's cutting my heart out. When I made my first call on her she kept on and on about how "low price" was the "only important factor" to her.

Abe: She did? Hm.

Alex: She did. You and I both know we aren't low price leaders in our industry, and that I haven't any leeway to give her special cut-rate deals. I told her that, in a nice way, because she has to already know that, but in case she didn't....

Abe: Seems unusual, maybe there's a personality conflict?

Alex: Maybe, but she seems friendly and forthcoming enough, except for her repeatedly beating my chops about low prices, but still I don't know her as well as you. Could I be missing something? Or, despite the soft smile, does she just hate me, because she balked at my tactful suggestions and at my helpful suggestions and she even threatened to cut some of her standing orders for this season. She's a major account and if her numbers dip, mine'll dip, and Regional will notice.

Abe: Well Alex, Wanda is a very intelligent buyer and has been doing this a long time. Hm. Here's what I think. She knows exactly why she buys from us; she probably just wants to make certain YOU know why she buys from us.

Alex: What? Great. She buys from us because we're her best distributors.

Abe just looked at him, expectantly, in his best mute and waiting salesman manner.

Alex: OK, I'll bite, old man. Why do you suppose she buys from us?

Abe: Well that's simple, young grasshopper. The reason is value.

Alex: Value is more than one thing, Abe, and a bit different for every person.

Abe: Yeah, there's product quality, customer service, satisfaction guarantees, product supply and on time delivery.

Alex: I explained that to her about our offerings of high quality products with the highest in sanitary process standards, products that are well packaged with the highest package marketing recognition. I explained that we have quality name brands that her front line customers are loyal to. That I know all her customers, though saying they want low

prices, also want THE best products and product quality they can purchase, even if that best they choose may cost just a little more and sometimes lot more. Y'know, Puffs tissues versus generic. Rolex versus Folex. Some of her customers may be poor but they're classy, or at least I said it better at the time. Plus, we have the fastest turnaround and emergency reorder and restock client service in the region.

Abe: Take a breath, man.

Alex: Despite how it sounds, I didn't rush her, I said all of that in a more stretched out and leisurely manner.

Abe: And Wanda still shut you down.

Alex: Yeah. Help.

Abe: All right, but hold on a minute, while I see if I can push back this next call. Okay?

Alex: Yeah.

Abe made his call and as it so often happens was able to reschedule his meeting until after lunch, his contact needed more time as well. He and Alex take their lunch together.

Abe: All right, Alex, let's roll up our sleeves and go over your points you made to Wanda one by one. High quality products. What value does that have for Wanda?

Alex: High quality products breed high trust with customers, we carry them because even though they're often more expensive they're price becomes a bargain because that product gets repeat sales because of its product reliability.

Abe: Good. Highest in sanitary process standards? What's that to her?

Alex: Wanda's making food peripherals, health, and beauty product sales, they need to be of the highest guaranteed quality. Our products are nationally lab tested beyond the government minimal standards. Their listed and confirmed as having the highest established sanitary process standards in their making. The more sanitary, the fewer germs and bacteria and the fewer possibilities of legal and moral liabilities caused by someone purchasing a product we acquired for Wanda and then later suing her company, her, and us for a medical problem or product tampering problem that may arise.

Abe: Hm. Not bad. I hadn't thought of that one.

Alex: It's important to me, I've got little ones and the thought of buying a product I assume, as a consumer—and a consumer should be able to have that kind of semi-blind trust in an established product. Anyway, if I buy a vanilla pudding cup for my little Lisa and it's expired or been tampered with and Company or the lab factories we buy from didn't product check and pull that product, and my Lisa got food poisoning.... My sister got food poisoning real bad when we were kids. She stopped breathing. They had to give her a tracheotomy. The thought of that and how helpless I felt. She could've died. And also my father-in-law's very sensitive to impurities. Anything wrong gets into his contact eye drops and his eyes swell shut. So, sanitary processes are real important to me.

Abe: Wow. I've known you for years. I never knew any of that.

Alex: It was a long time ago with my sister. She still has some nerve damage from that though. It really was vanilla pudding, she loved it, still loves it, just like her niece, Lisa. With

Wanda, I tried to not get maudlin about it, but explained our dedication in this vein, and mine in particular, over and above that, a dedication that again can pay off for her in cutting down on lawsuits and limiting potential bad rulings in the few that might occur. So, Abe, what's next on our list?

Abe: Well packaged with the highest package marketing recognition.

Alex: Simple and not so simple. People can love or hate the packaging the product comes in. Its esthetics, its appearance in color, bulkiness, or typeface can even keep some from buying that product, most especially if they're new to it and think the packaging makes the product look cheesy, substandard, or unfashionable. Or hard to use.

Abe: Good grooming for products.

Alex: Yeah. All, or at least most, of our products have "good grooming" and present well on the shelf or rack and always appear at the top of any lists of shoppers' buying preferences by appearance. Pretty is as pretty does.

Abe: Which lead us to quality name brands and loyalty; the inner quality of a product, not its surface.

Alex: Again we choose products that have registered very high with customers in the actual makeup of the makeup.

Abe laughs.

Alex: What I mean is that not only do we have products that are attractive while on display, but when it's taken home and tried, it actually feels good to the skin, smells good to the nose, and gives that customer a solidly good perception, a better perception of their skin's softness or flawlessness, of their body's scent or lack there of, depending on whether it's perfume or deodorant, and the like.

Abe: And low priced products being best products? Your Puffs versus the generic tissue, Rolex versus Folex, Fauxlex. How do you spell that, with an "o" or an "a-u-x," and is Folex/Fauxlex a real product?

Alex: "O" I think or maybe it's French, I'll have to check, but generally it means a cheaper knockoff of an expensive, well-established and well-branded product. Some products can be inexpensive and very good, but most people, I think, will spend a little bit extra and sometimes quite a bit extra cold, hard earned cash for a product they perceive as being of better quality; especially, something they truly believe they want and perceive as a need, even when it may not be. My wife usually doesn't need a brownie for a snack in the afternoon, but she says she wants it and indulges in it. It's her three dollar indulgence for a triple chocolate, freshly baked goodie when she walks past the prepackaged one in the vending machine, that's more than half its price.

Abe: Which gives us your "poor but classy"?

Alex: No one wants a sign on them that says, "I wear substandard goods; all my clothes are irregulars and secondhands; and cheap, rough and wrinkly cotton not the more expensive, fine and smooth pressed Egyptian cotton. Our products that we've placed before Wanda's customers give them a range of choices in price and perceived quality. Sometimes the quality is more established by independent testing labs as being of higher

or better, but it's still comes down to each individual's personal perception. One loves milk chocolate, another prefers dark.

Abe: And our turnaround.

Alex: We have the fastest turnaround and emergency reorder and restock client service in the region. I'm proud that you and the others before me established that and I'm happy to be a part of that client service for her. Giving her better and more efficient service than she expects and better than she gets from anyone else gets me juiced. If or when Wanda has a problem, like selling out of a hot product or a small store disaster, such as a sewage pipe flood on her products, leaving her with product that needs replacing, quickly, one call or one email to our 24-7 order service and she's restocked and selling again. Stat.

Abe: That's good, you have good grasp of what we do for our clients like Wanda and not just for ourselves, getting those big sales commissions.

Alex: A few big sales are a good thing.

Abe: Yes, yes it is. But getting deeper into this service on the frontline, deeper into what's important to a client company buyer and her subsequent floor customer, like how the sanitary process is of utmost importance to you; when you buy for yourself, Alex, why do you buy what you do? What value is in it for you? [Take the shoes you're wearing right now, for example. Were they the cheapest ones at the store?](#)

Alex: [No, they cost \\$200.](#)

Abe: [Two hundred dollars? My goodness, do they walk FOR you?](#)

Alex: [Ha-ha. No.](#)

Abe: [Then why? Why not deep discount store shoes?](#)

Alex: [These are a great brand, are extremely comfortable and, since I walk a lot, comfort is really important to me and to my spine and my chiropractor.](#)

Abe: So, you pay a great deal extra than the basic price for a cheap pair of walking shoes to get added value, which you perceive to be in these particular shoes as not merely fashionable but as actually good and healthy for your body and piece of mind. Is that right?

Alex: Gee. Since you put it like that. Yeah.

Abe: [Ok. How about your deodorant? Do you just buy whatever's on sale?](#)

Alex: [No, I use Company's. Because I know it works. Plus, I like the scent; so does my wife.](#)

Abe: Company suck up.

They laugh.

Abe: [Kidding aside, that's brand equity. You have confidence in and trust our products and our name. Just like many other people who use our products just for the same reasons. And that trust is something that is perceived beyond what the product was designed to do. Deodorant masks scent, but Company not only does this in a superior fashion for you, it also smells good to you and your wife. How's Jenny, by the way?](#)

Alex: Fine. She asked about you the other day, I forgot until now, too busy trying to figure out Wanda.

Abe: Tell Jenny I said hi. And remember that your shoes were designed mostly to protect your feet.

Alex: And that the added value, for me, is looking good, being comfortable, and saving my back from excruciating pain.

Abe: Right. But also remember that that is YOUR perception as a customer where as MINE may be that all I need is a shoe that looks good and is only moderately comfortable, while client Wanda, dear that she is, may think all she needs is low, low prices.

Alex: She may “think all she needs”?

Abe: Yes. That’s her perception, which she hasn’t fully shared with you. Perhaps, she’s getting flack from her bosses to cut expenses, or perhaps there’s another product group, something new, she’s trying to add to Sunsky’s catalogue by cutting expense prices elsewhere with her older stock, in order to get her budget in line to afford the new stock.

Alex: Gee. That’s a possibility, there’s all kinds of new things going on over at Sunsky. Hm. I should ask her what she’s specifically doing and how I can help her.

Abe: She’ll like that. Maybe you can help her reportion her orders, if setting up a new product section with a new budget is what she’s doing.

Alex: Thanks, Abe. I never would’ve thought of that.

Abe: You’re welcome. Also, let’s discuss what can you offer her in marketing that will add perceived value to her orders from you that cut-rate prices can’t add?

Alex: When her marketing department needs to go to press about the products we ship her, I can arrange for her to share some of the graphic and product copy we already have in place. It’ll give a consistency of design and text.

Abe: All right, now, tell me quick things that you can offer Wanda, right now. Whether you have or not, or whether I’ve done so in the past. You’re her new guy now, the man with the answers to her questions of “price,” and you answer back “value.”

Alex: Yes, teach. Well, product quality. We have the best products our buyers can purchase and I can put into her stores for her. Channel deliverables. When she needs it stat, I can get it to her, and if I’m unreachable, she doesn’t have to worry; Company will hear her and get what she needs to her ASAP.

Abe: What else have you got for Wanda?

Alex: Integrated marketing communications. We share product and marketing information so that, if she is starting up a new section of product, when she calls late tonight for an unexpected order for these new products, I’ll be able to research, price, order, and ship it to her fast. And help her get her product info to her marketing people so they can send it out to ads and the press, quickly.

Abe: Good. More.

Alex: Synergy between sales and marketing. I can help her make certain that she can market effectively what she wants to sell and that her sales people can depend on marketing putting the right products before the public, so when sales walks in the store to sell to their customers waiting hotly to come in and buy, the company sales pages in those

customers' hands will match what Sunsky is actually selling. There's nothing like having a full sales week of optimistic people walking in and asking for something that was mislabeled in the ad, and being disappointed, and angry at frontline sales.

Abe: No there's not.

Alex: Okay. I can offer our updated market leader execution of marketing mix programs; price, promotion, product, and place. I can help her realign her company and departmental parameters within Sunsky, if she wishes; and can offer her whatever latest we can from our end. I'll work side by side with her to make it as useful to her business as I can. And then I'll do more, because everyday there's more to do, but she and I won't know what until we get up and face the day. Or long night. 24-7 when her need arises.

Abe: What sort of relationship are you offering her?

Alex thought a brief moment, then nodded.

Alex: A quality relationship of mutual interest and mutual respect, and trust. I'll trust in her to remain my client and to let me serve her and help her accomplish what she wants to do and needs to do, to be successful. I'm her hidden partner, so to speak. And I'll encourage her to trust in me, that I'll be available before she needs me, anticipate her wants before they become needs, and be a helper she can rely on and never worry that I haven't done my best for her and her company.

Abe: What else do you have to offer Wanda, to make her job easier?

Alex: I offer high quality of service and professionalism. Anyone can do what they're asked to do. I'm her account manager and I help her manage by not only answering to her needs and wants when she calls me, but in thoroughly knowing her account, her company, and her. I should learn and know all of this well enough so that I can anticipate problems and intercept or alert her to them, BEFORE they arise. I make her say, "Wow!" with the service I give and the high professional manner in which I conduct myself.

Abe: What else you got, kid?

Alex: Brand equity of the products we sell and of Company itself. Wanda can trust in me, in Company, and in our products as the best available, that we upgrade often, and look for latest new products, and bargains on the best of the old. I can ensure her that not only am I concerned with keeping Company's corporate image and reputation high and intact, but I'm also concerned with ensuring the same for her Sunsky and for Wanda's position within Sunsky. Her reputation is mine. I maintain hers as if it were my own, and hold it safe.

Abe: Any tech concerns?

Alex: Oh, yeah. Almost forgot that. I regularly receive training in the latest technologies and at Company we update our equipment, procedures, and processes constantly; in order to ensure that we can give our client companies the support they need, promptly and successfully.

Abe: And what about Wanda's low, low price?

Alex: I'll always offer her the lowest I'm allowed and I'll seek to get her deals and discounts of goods and services whenever I can arrange it, but some things can't come in low price

only, value means more than pennies. There is service, trust, loyalty, and reliability; all of which I can guarantee, no matter what the price.

Abe: Alex, you sound more prepared to me than when we sat down to discuss this, but there are a couple more things to keep in mind about value perception and price. The Super Bowl show is the biggest ad ticket on television, and pretty much anywhere else. For 2007 alone, CBS got \$2.6 million per 30 second TV ad. That's about \$87,000 per second! Unimaginable, right? And who wouldn't want \$87,000 dollars in their pocket for one second of work?

Alex: I'm signing up.

Abe: The line starts behind me; I've got a kid in college and grandkids in the wings. The question is what makes a company think that thirty seconds at \$87,000 per is a good and economical deal?

Alex: It's perceived value. About 100 million people watch the Bowl, some just to see the commercials.

Abe: Why?

Alex: Well, the Super Bowl is, well, the Super Bowl of advertising. Most people watching are actually paying attention, and the ads are some of the most fun and creative that people, better known as consumers, will see all year; until the next year's Super Bowl. If only a tenth of the people who see your thirty seconds buys, the commercial time's paid for.

Abe: And if they don't buy?

Alex: There's the extras that I call perceived fun value. Herding cats, stalker lambs, and Mean Joe Green. People talk about those thirty seconds for days, years, some for decades. That's a huge ripple of virile advertising, despite the cost. My aunt never watches the game but she turns in periodically for the commercials. The worth of that sort of attention is priceless and beyond price value.

Abe: Yes, it is.

Alex: What was your other point? You said you had a couple.

Abe: I saw this a while back on a sitcom of all things and I thought it was quite profound for the likes of us. [During a sales call a salesperson asked to use the potential client's phone.](#) Seems like a bad idea, doesn't it?

Alex: Potentially tacky. Go on.

Abe: This account manager [dialed and then put the call on speaker.](#) Any guess at what happened next?

Alex: Absolutely none.

Abe: [It just played music and said, "Thank you for holding." Then, after a few more extended seconds of that, the salesperson said "Do you know who that is? That's our competitor. Now here is my direct cell phone number, which you can call 24 – 7. And your call will be answered."](#)

Alex: Gee, I wonder if he got that sale.

They both laugh.

Abe: Know what you're going to do about Wanda, now?

Alex: Find out what she truly wants and needs, ask if there's anything on the horizon she needs me to help her get done. Help her with her marketing and new products. Help her weed out and replace the old, stale products. And, mostly, I'll give her the best service and best value she's ever had, for her and her company; until she never questions and batters me about price again.

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