



## **Remember...Words Have Meaning!**

*-- Al E. Bavry, President Emeritus, Kimal Lumber & Hardware*

I remember years ago, listening to a speaker talking about the two most powerful “tools” you could have in your tool belt and mastering both....The WRITTEN word, and the SPOKEN word. When you become good at both, you are well-equipped to face most day-to-day situations. So, today, I’m going to “pick” on a word that is often misused or misunderstood: The word is PERCEPTION.

Most of us have heard people say, “His/her perception of...” or “Their perception is...” which can leave a door wide open for interpretation. It doesn’t speak of truth. In fact, it’s far from obvious what specifically the “perception” involves, or even how it evolved. So it’s a very hazy word, and reminds me of pinning Jell-O to a wall...Pretty hard to do!

So, real world stuff...Things we deal with all the time...For example, our Credit Department tells me that a builder short paid his bill by a fairly sizable amount. We check it out to find out that he’s “back-charging” us for some “corrections” he made on our trusses. We do our homework, and in a non-documented way, the builder tells how he had to “add bracing” and fix broken tails, which he of course conveniently forgot to tell our salesperson at the time...Our take on it, yes he might have used six ten foot Pine 2X4s and maybe spent an hour scabbing on these pieces. But his guy charged him five hundred dollars for this “huge” problem. So, you argue your case, but he’s locked in to the charge. His “Perception” is, with all the “lost” time, etc., that’s what it cost. Period. Facts and reality don’t match his PERCEPTION but you already know, you won’t win that one.

A good question to ask yourself when it comes down to a stubborn “Perception” is how you might—even so—get around it. Is there still a possibility you could change or alter that perception using not just facts, but some humor in comparisons, or a patient and sympathetic discussion to possibly find some common ground between that “perception” and “reality”? Why does that person cling to his/her perception so tightly? Is there a way to change it without insinuating that they were “wrong” to have it?

Another example of words “taking on their own meaning” (thanks to perception) is when you initiate a change in the company’s policy, procedure, systems, whatever...Even after you’ve done a masterful job of explaining what’s happening, “Perception” kicks in...”Oh, that will never work!” “We’ve done it this way for 20 years...why change?” “Boy, when this kicks in it will ruin everything!” And it goes on...I remember many years ago, at a (literally) round table meeting

with about twenty people there, my boss whispered a short message in my ear, and then instructed me to "Pass it on to the next person on your right, and everyone should keep passing the message till it gets back to me!" Of course when that message came back to my boss, it was totally different! The beginning REALITY became a PERCEPTION somewhere during that word-passing around the table.

My message is pretty simple. When you hear that something is being done, such as changes or whatever, and is very often carried (so well, I might add!) along the grapevine (that second-hand information trail), take time to pause and ask yourself "Is this the way it really is? Is this the way it was intended? Is there more to what I'm hearing?" Especially with those of you who are "Leaders," the lesson should always be...Take the time to get "the whole story." Always be a sceptic when these kind of things hit you...It may be just what you heard...Or, the "Truth" separated from the "Perception" might just be entirely different.

And one final word of caution: I suggest that when you're the one presenting something new...Do everything within your power to make sure that this "thing" doesn't get re-interpreted, re-analyzed, re-spoken, to the point where it becomes something totally different when it goes down the line. Remember, *words are powerful! Words have meaning!* Understand it wisely, which means when you "perceive" something, deal with it correctly ...Always be that voice of reason that takes the time to determine what is really factual...Not what has become the "Perception." ....'Nough said.