

Resetting the Clock - Doing What They Told You To Do

At a local university back in March, a professor was interrupted during a lecture by a maintenance technician who was there to adjust the classroom clock for Daylight Savings Time. The professor stopped the lecture. She was about to mention that the clock had stopped months ago and that she had requested that the batteries be changed, when she realized that the technician would obviously realize the clock was not working because the time was wrong. To her amazement, and to the amusement of the students in her class, the technician (let's call him "Jobsworth"), climbed the ladder and simply reset the clock one hour ahead. The new time on the clock was still nowhere near the correct time. "Hey," said Jobsworth as he picked up his ladder and left the room, "they told me to set all the clocks ahead by one hour. Some other guy is in charge of the batteries."

You may find this story amusing, but the sad fact is we have all seen that type of behavior before. It's the same as when we find ourselves saying, "Hey, I know we lost that bid, but don't look at me, I did my part." We are perpetuating a process-driven compliance model that encourages us to behave in ways that do not help us win in the market place.

There are certainly aspects of sales that call for a process model, so that we don't re-invent the wheel every time we try to sell something. Sales processes help us manage time and expenses and allow larger teams to divide the workload into manageable tasks. Isn't it satisfying to complete a task and check it off your list? It makes you feel like you have accomplished something. But you need to make sure that any task you perform is a necessary one, and one that will help you win. If it won't help you win, don't waste your time doing it! The sales processes we have in place exist to help you, but they are not simply step-by-step, color-by-numbers procedures. If selling were that easy, the company would have replaced us with an iPhone app years ago. We often say that selling is not rocket science, but this doesn't mean either that it is a simplistic task that requires no talent or creativity. There is a scientific component to sales, true; but there is also an artistic component. The last thing we want you to do is to be robotically compliant, blindly following the process. You need to use the processes as structure, but think things through, apply your own creative take on the artistic tasks, and adjust as needed.

Don't take cover safely behind *the science of the process*, only playing your small, well-defined part. See the bigger picture of how what you do will help the individuals in the client organization make better decisions based upon the facts and their beliefs.