

## **THIS Isn't The Room I Saw Online**

### **Many Things Are Possible, But Not All Things Are Probable**

By Kendall C. Wright, President of Entelechy Training and Development, Inc.

Booking hotel rooms via the internet has come a very long way. And so have the laws regarding truth in advertising. And I, for one, believe this is a good thing. I can recall my excitement in anticipation of a specific trip to New Orleans. New Orleans is by far one of my favorite cities. I so enjoy the people, the food, and the je ne sais quoi of the city. The purpose of this trip was to attend an international conference, and of course, I needed to book a room. I got online, found a great room, booked it, and I was all set. I just kept telling myself that this was going to be a great trip.

Once I arrived at the hotel I was startled to discover my room, while "nice," wasn't similar to the picture on the hotel's website—not at all. As you might expect, this was a serious problem because that picture had been instrumental in my booking decision. Needless to say, I was extremely disappointed to discover things weren't as represented on the website. Predictably, my disappointment quickly shifted to disgruntlement. I felt as if I'd been duped. Can you relate?

Today, many organizations are struggling with retention of quality talent. In fact retention of prized recruits ranks among the top priorities of organizations of all sizes. Now, I will be the first to concede that this is not a challenge that is easily rectified. And surely there are very few one-size-fits-all solutions to this escalating and very expensive challenge. However, it stands to reason that every organization would do well to evaluate the degree of dissimulation between propaganda and reality. Specifically, leaders must evaluate what new hires or new promotes are being told against what "reality" requires, even demands, of them to be truly successful in the role.

The hotel in New Orleans did have one room as pictured on the webpage, so they weren't selling a boldface lie, but there was only one room like the room pictured - that is only one room like it in the entire hotel! Often organizations will use a similar approach in recruiting and staffing. They spend significant energy and resources Future Casting the ideal, best case outcomes (achievable only under extraordinarily favorable conditions and circumstances), while neglecting to prepare the new recruit or new promote for the grind of real world work.

### **Future Casting vs Fact Checking**

The practice of "future casting" involves highlighting and emphasizing the most positive of outcomes while neglecting to consider the actual probability of such outcomes. Leaders, managers, supervisors, etc. who only tell half the truth (the upside) are aligning themselves to experience full-fledged failure. Being honest and realistic doesn't prevent you from also being optimistic and encouraging. But to be only blindly optimistic in absence of realism is to set yourself and your associates up for gross disappointment. Every leader should be reminded that in the workplace as well as in the marketplace, disappointment always has a price tag.

As a way to minimize the disappointment of unbalanced and unrealistic expectations, the leader needs to share the historical pattern of progress, growth, and earnings with those new to the organization or new to the role. This strategy allows the new person to create their own arena of competition.

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### Create A Personal Arena Of Competition

The concept of the personal arena is based on creating a healthy competition between the new person and the old standard – a realistic standard, not a wish-upon-a-star standard. After being presented the historical pattern, the new recruit can compete against a realistic target as opposed to a hypothetical implausibility. Here is an illustration of the concept in practice. A new realtor, Kendra, is introduced to the “Ace” of the brokerage. The Ace shared her successes, strategies, and secrets with the new team member. The Ace’s income figures were extremely impressive and the new team member mentally began to spend money he had yet to earn. Fortunately, the Ace was wise enough to tell the new realtor that such success is a very long and arduous journey. She highlighted that her success didn’t happen overnight, and neither will the new realtor’s. Most importantly, the Ace reiterated that it will take time and great effort to get his book of business up and running well enough to produce even moderate success.

Organizational leaders must communicate responsibly as they seek to recruit and promote. While such straightforward truth may frighten off a few prospects, those who accept the challenge are usually a better fit for long term success in the organization. The propensity to push, promote or sell pie-in-the-sky possibilities comes with an incredible downside. The downside includes low morale, low levels of buy-in, low productivity, and high turnover.

New recruits and new promotes may be mesmerized by the bling of the upside, but make no mistake, failing to clarify the reality of an opportunity dramatically increases the probability that the downside forces the bottom to fall out of their relationship with the organization.

Be optimistic, be encouraging, be enthusiastic, but don’t be irrational or unreasonable. While many things are possible, not everything is probable.

**Leadership Lesson:** Consumers have long decried the unethical advertising tactic known as bait and switch. As unpleasant as it is to be duped by the local grocer, can you imagine the frustration of being duped by an interviewer? Painting an unrealistic, overly optimistic picture of an opportunity may lure a few unsophisticated recruits, but the odds are against them becoming long term contributors. While unlimited income is possible, it will serve the recruit and or the new promote best if you share with them the historical pattern of progress, growth, and earnings of those in similar circumstances. This truth remains: While many things are possible, not everything is probable.

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