

Denial Is Not A River In Egypt

By Mike Stewart, CSP



The question on our little trivia quiz was, "What is the longest river in the world?" I guessed wrong. Turns out the correct answer was: The Nile is the longest river in the world.

I should have known! It correlates so closely with the longest list of avoidance behaviors used by salespeople to stay in their comfort zones. Not De Nile, but Denial.

Denial is right up there with whining, blaming, and stalling when it comes to behaviors people use to avoid having to do those parts of their job they find distasteful, or even fearful.

For example, way too many salespeople will do most anything in their power to avoid prospecting for new business, even though it is an absolute fact that they must sell new business to be successful. Another sales example is the resistance a great many salespeople have to completing their paperwork and turning it in on time.

Two paragraphs ago, I said, "Denial is right up there with whining, blaming, and stalling." I was wrong. Denial is way ahead of these, and every other avoidance technique I can think of.

Here's why: Whining, blaming, stalling and every other excuse merely seeks to justify why a thing was not done. However, these excuses do not absolve the person of responsibility for getting a thing done.

Denial, on the other hand, is calculated to allow people to escape responsibility entirely, and remain in their comfort zones without feeling the guilt associated with failure. For example:

- My boss gives "new sales" lip service, so they aren't important
- My job is really maintaining customer relationships, not selling
- I can't be responsible for my quota when the market is so bad
- My job is selling, not turning in reports

Anais Nin says,

**"We don't see things as they are,
we see things as we are."**

That is what happens when you are in denial. You are not seeing things as they really are, but as you would like for them to be.

This conclusion leads to two courses of action I recommend very strongly if you are genuinely interested in taking your success, job satisfaction and personal happiness to a higher level:

1. Sit down with your coach (someone you trust implicitly who sincerely cares about you) and review the disconnects in your belief system between things as they are and things as you would like for them to be. The first place to look is where your work performance is being criticized. If, for example, your job description says you have to sell new business and turn in reports, that is reality. Don't deny it. Come to terms with it.
2. Think about the real message here in terms of your self-esteem, your career and your life achievement potential. This message goes way beyond making short-term adjustments to increase your immediate success. What this really means is that what you are denying is a reflection of your self image.

**"Our self image, strongly held,
essentially determines what we become."
- Maxwell Maltz**

If, for example, you find yourself denying that new sales are important, this tells you that your self image is not that of a rainmaker. If you find yourself denying that reporting is important, this tells you that your self image is not that of an accountable manager.

If either, or both, of these is true, what do they tell you about what the future holds for your career?

Whatever your individual situation may be, the first step in getting yourself on a faster track is identifying those real things you are denying, dealing with the truth, and moving on.

My grandmother used to quote The Book as follows, "Know the truth and the truth will set you free." You may want to think of that in conjunction with this old Eskimo proverb:

**"The truth that will set you free
is the truth you don't want to hear."**

**Just out of curiosity, are you denying that this message
applies to you? If you are, you may want to reread it.**

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