

Now I was in a pickle. Just a few weeks ago, I began my sales job totally unprepared. But the company's training program had helped me manage some success. Yet the company had no training when it came to giving orientations. There was no script to memorize. There were no dress rehearsals. It was up to me to remember what I'd seen before and do it myself.

I could have asked Brian for time to practice. I might have asked him to schedule me for a different day than that very same night. But I did neither, even though a part of me was terrified. And I would have been more so if I had known what would happen next.

The evening presentations were typically larger than those in the afternoon. Some people who were considering joining the company would come see the orientation for a second time. Other people would bring parents or friends to get their advice. That evening the entire room was packed. Every seat was filled. I nervously scanned the room looking for the least intimidating person there. I located him, an elderly gentleman with a kind and gentle face. He and his wife had accompanied their daughter. I was relieved when all three sat down together in the middle of the front row.

My presentation began. I'd noticed that other reps would begin their talks by sharing a story about how they had come to join the company. They'd sprinkle in some self-deprecating humor to warm up the crowd. So, I shared a short, light-hearted introduction about myself. No one seemed to care. I attempted a joke. People stared at me expressionless. My voice wavered, then cracked. My hands started to sweat. Thinking of what to say next, I stumbled over my words. I tried not to think about stumbling over words. That made it worse. I had barely begun my presentation, and I was already praying for it to be over.

After what felt like an eternity, I arrived at the part of the presentation where I was to do a few product demos. Demonstrations were something I was familiar with. I did them every day. For a moment, my heart rate slowed down. My blood pressure began to fall. Here was an opportunity for me to regain my composure. I walked over to the product stand.

The company had a very clever demonstration to show off their water filter. The demo involved a pool chlorine test kit. I'd run tap water in the test tube, add a couple drops of solution, and the tap water would instantly turn color. The more chlorine was in the water, the darker yellow or orange it would turn. Then, I'd perform the same test on some filtered water and the color would not change. All the chlorine had been filtered out! It was a powerful visual.

While everyone looked on, I dropped, plop plop, two dabs of solution into the test tube. The tap water turned dark orange immediately. I looked towards the audience. I held the tube in one hand and a color chart in the other. I spoke with a dramatic flair. "Remember *this* is a test meant for a *pool*. This chart in my hand shows what *pool* levels of chlorine should be." Then I stepped towards the friendliest person in the room, the elderly man with the kind face. I held the test tube and chart out towards him. "Sir, please tell us, where on this chart is the color of our tap water," I implored.