

His wife shifted uncomfortably in her chair. The man gave a kindhearted grin but did not answer.

I realized he hadn't understood my question. I smiled reassuringly at the audience. Then I bent down closer towards the man. "Just read the chart here sir. What number on the chart does the color indicate? Right there," I shot my index finger out at the color chart. His daughter now seemed a bit uneasy too, though my brain did not register this in real time. "I don't know," the man said softly.

"What is going on?" I wondered. I looked up at everyone. This time I stretched a smile with as much fake confidence as I could muster. I looked back at the man. "Oh, I bet you do know. It's not hard at all! Just look right here at the chart," I said with a forced laugh. Sticking the tube and chart right in front of the elderly man's face I asked once more "Now what do you see?" Time stood still as I waited for his answer.

After a moment of silence, his wife leaned over and spoke loudly, "My husband is blind. He cannot see your chart!"

I am not exactly sure what happened next. I vaguely remember several gasps, one of which might have been my own. A wave of muffled laughter slowly spread across the room. I noticed Brian standing in the back. His eyes were wide as saucers. My mind, which had completely frozen for a moment, suddenly snapped back online. "Oops!" I said. Then I turned and asked the wife if she would read the chart. She was not pleased!

That was my very last presentation for a long time.

As I look back at this disaster, it's easy to see this train wreck approaching from miles away. The gentleman on the front row was blind by condition. I was blinded by flying by the seat of my pants. I'd been improvising for years. Yet my strategy of winging it was not getting me anywhere close to where I wanted to be.

That evening set off a subconscious alarm inside my brain. Over the years, ever since that presentation, I've had recurring dreams. In these dreams I am always unprepared. I'm also always in front of some audience or other. Sometimes I haven't learned my lines. Sometimes I'm running late. Other times I'm buck naked. In some dreams, it's all of these things at once! But every time I have one of these dreams, it's a reminder. Before setting forth, I need to be prepared.

Tuyet Nguyet is someone who understood this concept well. Her story of success was no accident. She wasn't from wealth. In fact, her financial status meant little to her. Nguyet's collection of treasures was the result of a lifelong passion, focus, and careful dedication to her craft. The rare and valuable objects she acquired were a product of the thorough work she invested into her profession.

Before Nguyet started collecting artifacts, she began her professional career as an investigative journalist in Vietnam. As a reporter, she honed her skills at research and analysis. Before she could report the news, she had to be well-versed and fully researched. She was soon recognized by her colleagues for her tenacity and attention to detail.