

JBL and Bose

The guy that helped me buy Calypso, in the early days of the transaction, pointed out that there were choices regarding the features. One of them was the Bose 10 speaker sound system. I said to him, “You’re saying that to me like it’s a good thing.” He said, “Yeah, it’s a Bose system.” I said, “Yup, that’s my point.”

So I told him this story:

Years earlier in my Sales Management role, one of my sales guys responsible for Northridge area of Los Angeles, got me an opportunity to make a rather large sale to JBL. I went to “close the sale” and was given a tour of the plant. It was heavily engineering oriented. As I walked through the “shop” area, I saw an engineer working on a very small set of speakers (about the right size for a car application). I asked him what he was working on. He told me he was engineering the flatness of the cross-over response between the mid-range and the tweeter. I thanked him and went on; eventually to the conference room where we talked about the system they wanted. I later put a system together for them, priced it and sent them a quote. We won the job.

It turned out that it wasn’t just the one system – they actually wanted five of them. When all was said and done it turned out to be a quarter of a million dollar sale. This of course delighted my management. At the monthly review meeting it was discussed and I was given a side mission of going to Bose to propose a duplicate system for them. Arrangements were made and I was off to Bose.

Upon my arrival I asked for the same type of meeting. First a tour of their plant, and then the meeting where I would propose the system that would delight their engineering people. Off we went.

On the tour I again stopped in the shop area for another momentary word with a technician at a bench. Again, I asked him what he was working on. He said, without looking up; “I’m trying to engineer another 2 bucks out of this \$10 speaker.”

OK so I moved on – did the presentation and sold them virtually an identical system (actually systemS) to the one I sold at JBL. I then went back and wrote a script for other sales people to use at other speaker manufacturers, as the opportunities came up.

BUT that is not the point of this telling of the story:

Did you catch the difference between the engineers at JBL and Bose?

JBL was engineering the “sound” of their speakers.

Bose was engineering the “cost” of their speakers.

SO the point I’m trying to make – In Calypso, I have a 10 speaker sound system made by the company that was focused on making cheap stuff. I’m thinking I would rather have the sound good. But I’m 66 now – perhaps the good sound is not as important as the other features of Calypso.