



Perspective on Perception

A master class from a 5-year-old

by: Jeannette Doucette, Smart Technologies of Florida

My son just turned five and, like any 5-year-old boy, he is obsessed with superheroes. The kid breathes Spiderman, eats Spiderman and, if he could, he would swing to school on imaginary webs. So, for his birthday, we got him a bright red Spiderman-themed digital watch. It lights up, flashes the time, and — in my opinion — makes him look like the coolest kid on the kindergarten playground. I patted myself on the back, certain I had nailed the “cool mom” gift of the year.

The next day, I overheard someone say, “Hey buddy, nice watch!” Without missing a beat, my son corrected them. “It’s not a watch.” I blinked. Excuse me? This thing was literally strapped to his wrist, ticking away in oversized block numbers. But he doubled down, with the confidence only a kindergarten can muster: “It’s not a watch ... because it doesn’t make phone calls.”

In his world, if it does not ring, ping, track steps or FaceTime grandma, then it is just a toy. And in that moment, I realized something both funny and profound: His definition of “watch” was not wrong — it had simply evolved.

When Definitions Shift

When I was five, a watch did two things: told time and made you feel grown-up. Maybe it glowed in the dark if you were lucky. Fast-forward a couple of decades and the baseline has completely shifted. My son does not see a watch as something that tells time — time-telling is assumed. To him, a real watch is one that calls people, counts his steps and probably tells him when it is snack time.

And honestly, he is not wrong. For him, the definition has already changed. His generation will not remember a world where watches did not talk back. The perception of what something should be has already overtaken what it used to be.

It is a small story, but it mirrors something much bigger happening all around us — in our relationships, our workplaces and especially in the office technology industry.

The Office Technology Parallel

In the office technology world, this kind of perceptual shift happens every day. What something is and what people believe it is are often two very different things — and if you are in the business of selling, servicing or implementing technology, ignoring that gap can cost you more than a few misunderstandings.

Take the cloud, for instance. Technically, it is just someone else’s server — racks of hardware sitting in a data center



somewhere. But to most people, it is magic. It is infinite storage, instant access and peace of mind that everything is “backed up somewhere safe.”

Another example is cybersecurity. For IT professionals, it is a layered, evolving defense strategy with policies, monitoring and prevention. But to the average employee? It is a nuisance — another password, another pop-up, another reminder to update something he (or she) would rather not think about. Until, of course, there is a breach. Then suddenly it is not optional; it is oxygen.

And do not get me started on “digital transformation.” Executives hear those words and envision sleek automation, modern systems and future-ready innovation. Employees, meanwhile, may just see another platform to learn, another login and another disruption to their routines.

Perception defines expectations. And when expectations are not met, the reality of your product or service will not matter.

Mind the Gap

Just like I cannot convince my son that his Spiderman watch is technically a watch, you cannot convince customers that your solution is valuable if it does not line up with what they already believe it should be.

You can talk specs. You can showcase features. You can even exhibit glowing case studies and ROI charts. But if the perception of value does not match the story you are telling, you have lost the sale before the conversation even begins.

Businesses often fall into the trap of defining their solutions by what they do rather than how they are perceived. But here is the reality: perception drives adoption. Perception drives trust. And perception can kill a perfectly good solution before

it ever has a chance to prove itself.

This is why change management exists. It is why branding matters. It is why communication — honest, empathetic communication — is as essential as the technology itself.

A Leader's Takeaway

So, what is the takeaway? Meet people where they are, not where you think they should be. That means listening before pitching, translating features into outcomes that resonate and showing how your solution can make someone's day better — not just his workflow. It means speaking his language instead of asking him to learn yours.

And sometimes it means redefining your own categories. Maybe what you have been calling “automation” is really “time saving.” Maybe “infrastructure” should be “peace of mind.” Maybe the story you have been telling needs to sound a little more human. Because, at the end of the day, technology is just a tool. The magic happens when people believe in what it does for them.

My son's Spiderman watch will never make a phone call. In

Meet people where they are, not where you think they should be. That means ... showing how your solution can make someone's day better ...

his eyes, that makes it less of a watch. And in the business world, if your shiny new technology does not align with how your audience perceives it, it might not matter what it actually does — your office superhero moment may just fall flat on its watch face. So, yes, perception wins. Every time. But when you take the time to understand it, shape it and respect it — that is when you turn a simple watch into something that truly connects. ■

Jeannette Doucette is the director of administration at Smart Technologies of Florida, where she has spent more than two decades driving operational excellence and supporting innovation.

Happily married with two energetic young boys, Doucette is also the author behind the mom blog, All The Giggles, which can be found at allthegiggles.squarespace.com.

She can be reached at jdoucette@smarttechfl.com. Visit www.smarttechfl.com.

