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Jordan Disberger 🏠 · Jun 8 · 2 min read



## The Ladder of Inference – Effective Communication

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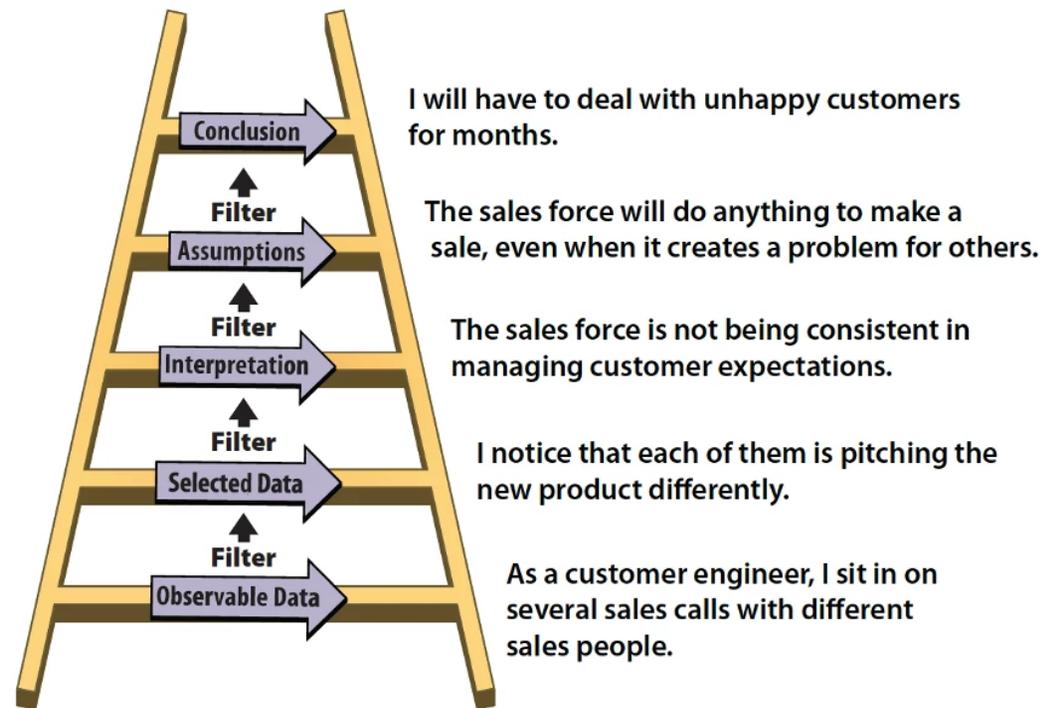
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### What is the Ladder of Inference?

The Ladder of Inference is an analogy for the steps all people take up a ladder as we infer information regarding a situation based on a data set of facts. This ladder is common. We all use it when making decisions.

## Ladder of Inference



Here is an example:



*You are working on a project and need help and some key information from Mary.*

*You remember past disagreements...*

*You begin to think, she must be avoiding you and she never liked you...*

*Mary is trying to sabotage you...*

*You decide that next time she needs something you won't give it to her...*

*You start looking for examples of how she is trying to get you...*

*You now can't stand her either. You might bad mouth her or even try to sabotage her.*

*You start giving her dirty looks and soon other notice.*

*You started with real observable data. Your mail and voice mail were not returned. - **HARD***

### **FACT**

*You made assumptions based on that data/facts.*

*You drew conclusions and made decisions based on your assumptions.*

*You took action based on those conclusions.*

*You seek evidence to support your conclusions.*

*Each time you do react, the reflexive loop gets tighter and tighter as you convince yourself that Mary is out to get you, when in fact, you are creating the reality to support your decision.*

### **How can I use the Ladder of Inference for good?**

There are ways to prevent yourself from leaping up the ladder of inference

You can improve your communications through reflection

- Becoming more aware of your own thinking and reasoning
- Making your thinking and reasoning more visible to others
- Inquiring into others' thinking and reasoning

### **Once Mary and you understand**

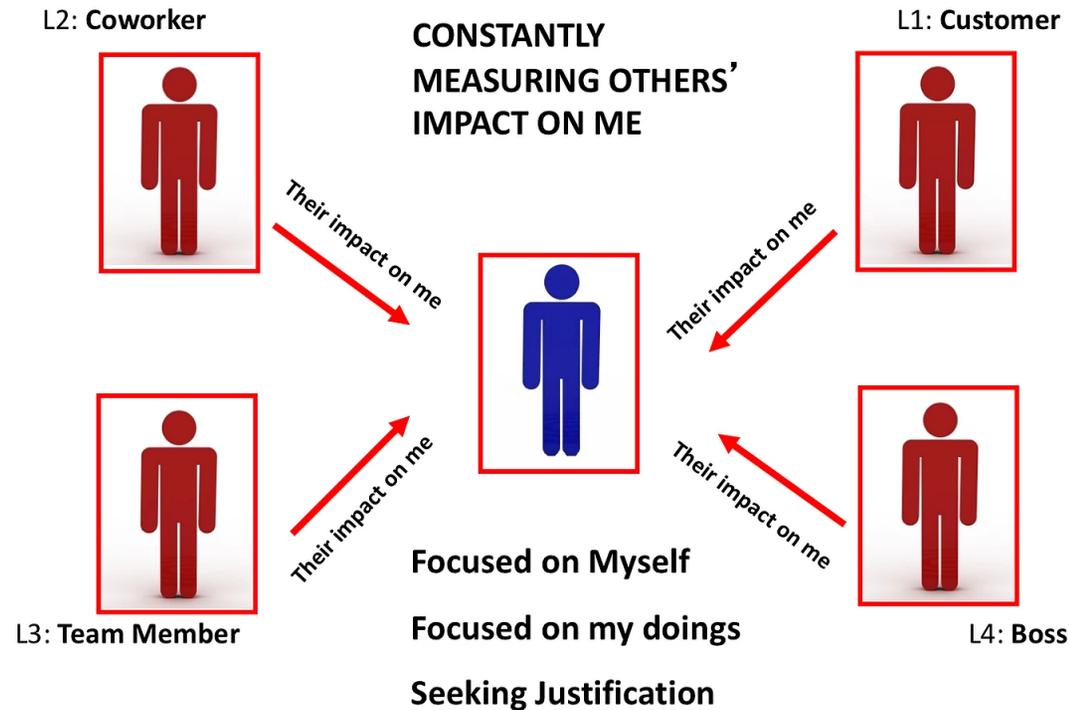
**Stop a conversation in its tracks and ask:**

Ask for data in an open-ended way: "Mary, why haven't you returned my calls or answered my emails?"

Or test the observable data:

"You haven't returned my calls or emails Mary."

To which she might reply: "Yeah, I've been on vacation and I'm buried right now. What do you need?"



### Key Take Aways:

- If I am focused on myself and progressing up the Ladder of Inference, I should check myself to see if I am causing any toxic situations.
- If I am focused on others or the business and progressing up the Ladder of Inference, this is typically a positive process used for problem solving and making quick deductions.

# SOLVING THE BETRAYAL PROBLEM

*Remember ...*

When I am on the Ladder of Inference



**SEE OBJECTS!**

- focus on myself
- focus on my doings
- measure others' impact on me

When I am off of the Ladder of Inference



**SEE PEOPLE!**

- focus on others
- focus on results
- measure my impact on others



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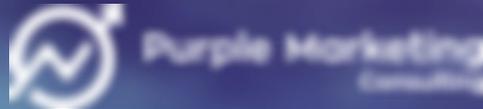
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