

The Three Buskers

Derrick Oswald (500 words)

Once upon a time, in the not too distant future, three grad students fleeing oppressive student debt, arrived in a small town in Spain. They were hitch-hiking and backpacking across the country. They busked for coins, so they were always hungry.

“I will go to the market, for surely there, someone will pay to see me juggle” said the first.

“I will go to the high street” said the second, “where shoppers will surely pay to see my magic act.”

“I will play my flute at the town gate where everyone must pass” said the third.

Soon, an old woman came out of the market carrying two heavy bags of groceries.

She stopped and set her bags down, and had a cool drink from the public water fountain because the midday sun was very hot. She watched the first student deftly juggling three, then four, and then five colorful balls.

“Is my juggling not worth a Euro?” he asked.

“No, I drink here nearly every day, and it makes no difference to me if you juggle not” she said. She picked up her bags and went on.

In the shade of the city hall tower she stopped, set her bags down and sat down on a bench. She watched the second student produce a large bouquet from a tiny box, and perform card tricks of every sort.

“Is my magic not worth a coin? he asked.

“No, I rest here nearly every day, and I don't care if you are doing magic tricks” she said. She stood up, picked up her bags and went on.

She arrived at the city gate, and put down her bags under a large elm, resting before the climb up the steep hill to her home. She listened to the third student playing Greensleeves on his flute.

“Would you contribute a coin so you can hear music on your way?” he asked.

“No, it matters not if I hear music while climbing the hill” she said.

The third student thought for a moment and said “Those bags look very heavy and must be quite a burden especially with those cantalopes. I'm curious, how much are they per kilogram?”

“€2 per kilo” she said.

“If I carry your bags up the hill will you share a cantalope with me?” he asked.

The old woman paused and said “That's a good offer, I dread carrying them up the hill. Come.”

So the student pocketed his flute, picked up the lady's bags, and followed the old woman up the hill. At the top, both were sweating and collapsed under the shade of the old woman's olive tree.

True to her word, the old lady pulled out a pocket knife and cut the melon, first in half, then in quarters and then in eighths and offered four pieces to the student. They both ate the ripe fruit with relish.

The moral of the story is: be prepared to pivot your business model to satisfy the customer.