*The Office* Season 3, Episode 12 “Traveling Salesman”: Audience Awareness Exercise

**Overview of the Show**: *The Office* is a sitcom/mockumentary that documents the lives of regular office workers at a fictional paper company called Dunder Mifflin. The employees’ jobs include sales, management, accounting, and other typical office positions.

**Overview of the Episode**: The salespeople of the office team up in pairs to go on sales calls in an attempt to gain new clients (or renew contracts) for Dunder Mifflin. Two teams succeed in their sales pitches, and two do not. Various subplots occur, such as Andy attempting to sabotage Dwight’s reputation with Michael, Angela’s gushing over her boyfriend Dwight’s kind deed, Dwight and Angela’s relationship being hidden from the rest of the office, and Karen learning of her boyfriend Jim’s previous romantic feelings for the receptionist, Pam.

**Overview of Characters**:

* Team One:
	1. Michael: branch manager, fourteen years of experience
	2. Andy: new transfer salesman from another branch, unknown experience
* Team Two:
	1. Dwight: lead salesman, winner of salesman of the year award (for multiple years), eight plus years of experience
	2. Jim: salesman, eight plus years of experience
* Team Three:
	1. Phyllis: saleswoman, ten plus years of experience
	2. Karen: new transfer saleswoman from another branch, unknown experience
* Team Four:
	1. Stanley: salesman, known for having the most consistent sales record for the branch, ten plus years of experience
	2. Ryan: junior salesman, less than one year of experience

**Review Questions on the Show**: (For class discussion)

1. What makes this show funny? Many people argue that *The Office* requires a certain kind of humor to be appreciated—do you think that’s true? Why or why not? If the show does require a particular sense of humor, do you think that’s a smart move on the part of the writers, or that the show would be more effective if they appealed to a broader audience?
2. Though the show primarily seeks to entertain through humor, many moments of the show appeal greatly to other emotions and encourage viewers to become invested in the personal lives of the characters. Why do you think this is? Does this distract from the humor of the show, or make the show more interesting? Why?

Review Questions on the Sales Pitches: (To turn in)

1. What specifically caused Ryan to lose the sale? How could he have improved his approach?
2. Do you think Stanley would have landed the sale had he gone to the sales pitch alone? Why or why not?
3. What specific sales strengths did Michael show?
4. Andy attempts to follow Michael’s sales tactics but derails the sale—where did he go wrong?
5. Jim and Dwight succeed even when the client poses valid concerns about pricing. What strategies allowed them to accomplish the sale?
6. Do you think Jim and Dwight’s previous work together bettered their sales tactics? Why or why not?
7. What sales strengths did Phyllis show?
8. Karen misinterprets Phyllis’s methods initially and doesn’t seem to contribute much to their success in the sales pitch. What could she have done to improve the likelihood that they successfully made their pitch?