The author of the article “Your Customers Do Not Mean What They Say” tells us about the difficulties in gathering information from customers.

This article has something in common with the “Ask, “What Would the User Do?” (You Are Not the User)” by Giles Colborne. I mean both authors lead to the fact that the customer can’t explain all nuances of his task. He just thinks they are evident. This is compounded by the fact that many customers don’t know what they really want. As a rule, they just need one button with the mark “Make everything well”. But, unfortunately, it is impossible. So we have to show miracles of ingenuity to collect all demands for the program.

Nate Jackson says that the good way to get the complete idea of the task is swapping out the customer’s words in conversation with them and discussing the task with multiple people. I agree with him. So we can look at the task from different sides and collect more demands and notes.

And the most useful way to collect demands is using visual aids in our conversations. If we don’t understand some nuances, we can draw a picture or make a note on the diagram. As the proverb says, “A picture is worth a thousand words”.

There was the happening in authors’ life when he was a “multimedia programmer”. When one customer saw the product, her exact words about the background color were, “When I said black, I meant white”. As you see, it is never as clear as black and white. Unfortunately, the mind-reading machine has not yet been invented. So we need to do our best to find out what our customers really want, even when they don’t mean what they say.