Dear Abbe,

For the last few years I have been sentenced to research management, and I fear I am losing touch with the technical world. I am responsible for my group’s execution of cutting-edge research. In industry terms, that involves generating pretty SEMs which please our upper management. Recently I have seen many color SEMs in online news items. I’m wondering: where can I purchase one of those nifty color electron microscopes? We all know about green M&Ms, but is there anything I should know about orange electrons?

De-lobed in Cincinnati

Dear Lobeless,

It would seem that you and your upper management have been hoodwinked by one of the oldest tricks in the book, namely falsely adding color to a black-and-white image. This practice was perfected by my dear friend Wallace Nutting who used the technique to peddle his photographs. At one time Wallace employed over 200 colorists who added just the right shades of green, pink, and brown to make it seem as if his photos were in color. Tricks, tricks, tricks! Secretly I think that he did this to get back at those who had chopped the head off of his great-grandfather and stuck in on the top tip of his pine cone, but Wallace assured me that it was done solely to amass wealth. These days Rechtsverdreher Microscope sellers have found that gullible labs will still fall for this subterfuge. As P.T. Barnum once noted, “A fool and his money will make my wallet fat!” Next time your boss wants a colorized SEM, do what I do. Distribute a stack of photos to a bunch of third graders and ask them to vote on which please our upper management. In industry terms, that involves generating pretty SEMs which please our upper management. Recently I have seen many color SEMs in online news items.

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