

The Power of Perceptions in Business

Perceptions are HOW we see things. Take, for example, the following man.



You just hired him to revamp and manage part of your organization that has been struggling to work together effectively. He comes from outside your industry, but has 12 years experience in developing dynamic teams. The function of his new team is extremely strategic to the success of the company. His predecessor is still considered a valued member of the company, and will continue to be a part of this man's new team.

How do you perceive this new man?

How will others perceive him?

Review the following table to see how others may perceive him.

Audience	Perception	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions
You	"Great Addition"	optimistic	happy, relieved	supportive, helpful
Company President	"Change Agent"	exactly what we need	excited, hopeful	takes him to lunch, shares his vision
Director of Staff Development	"Training Headache"	doubts employee's abilities and knowledge	overwhelmed, annoyed	avoidance, curt
Co-Workers	"Outsider, Competition"	job security concerns	threatened, jealousy	unwelcoming, cold shoulder
Employee #1	"We don't need more change"	confused, cluttered	instability, panic, anxiety	just follows orders
Employee #2	"Finally, a competent leader"	motivated	thankful	cooperative, encouragement
Employee #3	"Enough, is enough"	I need change	doesn't believe	distant, introspective
His Predecessor	"This is MY Team"	pessimistic	resentful, slighted, demeaned	works with a chip on his shoulder

Same situation. Different perceptions. This is a very common occurrence when change occurs. The President, you and Employee #2 are the only ones who have a perception that might lead to positive change for the organization. The other groups within the company have perceptions that will lead to lack of focus, an unhealthy work environment, and negativity that will ultimately fester into failure.

Perceptions are an individual's choice – a choice based on their current thoughts and feelings – and acknowledged by their actions. Using The O'Meara Process, you, the president and your new manager can work with the various constituencies, either individually or in groups, to guide them to choose a single perception that will unite the organization. A united organization will share a common culture, vision and strategy resulting in growth and achievement for the entire organization.

Let's take a look at how David O'Meara would implement The O'Meara Process to help this company get back on track in **How to Apply The O'Meara Process**.

How to Apply The O'Meara Process

When you apply The O'Meara Process to the scenarios from **The Power of Perceptions in Business** you start to uncover the reasons behind the person's perception. Uncovering this information is extremely helpful later in the Process as you help the employee choose a new perception that will improve their performance. Below on the left side of the table, we show the Old Perception and the Reasons that support that way of thinking. On the right side of the table, we offer a New Perception and the Reasons that the employee will accept that new perception as a better outlook on the situation at hand. Each of the employees identified in The Power of Perceptions in Business is analyzed.

Director of Staff Development

Old Perception	New Perception
Training Headache	Trust the strategy and direction of the company
Reasons	
<p>1. The company has been growing and hiring a lot of new people from outside the industry that are considered "raw talent", but they have needed intensive "101" training. She has a minimal staff and the additional training requirements have created increased stress in her department. Her prejudices have placed the new director into a category with others that have joined the company from outside the industry. She doubts his abilities and knowledge.</p>	<p>1. She now realizes that the growth of her company has depleted the pool of candidates with industry experience from their community. For the company to continue to grow, they need to train people from outside their industry. If the new hires don't feel welcome within the organization they will leave. The company has invested a significant amount of money finding, recruiting and in some cases relocating these individuals.</p>
<p>2. The New Director had met with her and posed a number of new ideas about how he wants to develop his new team. This has created additional stress within her department due to the need for new content, processes and materials.</p>	<p>2. She now has an appreciation for the valuable ideas, diverse backgrounds and relevant experiences that people from outside the industry bring to the company. She believes that leveraging this diversity will help differentiate their company in the future.</p>
<p>3. On a personal note, she is good friends with his predecessor; they had joined the company at the same time over 17 years ago. She felt badly that her friend was replaced with an "outsider".</p>	<p>3. She learned her longtime friend, will stay with the company in a new role as a valuable member of the development team. A role that is more in line with his experience.</p>

Co-workers

Old Perception	New Perception
Outsider, Competition	He is not the enemy.
Reasons	
<p>1. His new peers are concerned about their job security. They are feeling threatened by this new team member and hiring practice. Will hiring from outside the industry be a standard practice for other management and senior management positions?</p>	<p>1. They trust executive management's decisions on the future path of the company and department. The decision to hire someone from outside the company was strategic – sometimes developing new products requires a new way of thinking. Executive management has state that this practice is not be appropriate for all departments of the company.</p>
<p>2. Previously, all directors had been promoted from within the company. In fact, the whole team averages more than 10 years experience with the company. His peers are feeling a little jealous of how easy it was for him to join the staff after they had worked their whole careers to get to this level within the company.</p>	<p>2. Management has reiterated their commitment to consider all qualified “internal” top performers for promotion before external candidates will be interviewed. The team also came to realize that the new director had also worked <u>his</u> whole career to get to this position.</p>
<p>3. What will happen to the company's culture? He doesn't know how or why we do things around here.</p>	<p>3. The department has been missing their monthly performance goals; employee morale and compensation (profit-sharing) were dropping. Everyone understood that a change was necessary – how they were doing things today was not working. The team also recognized that they might learn something from the director's previous experience and industry that they can use to differentiate themselves from competitors in the future.</p>

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Employee #1

Old Perception	New Perception
We do not need more change.	Support management's decision and work on being open-minded in this time of transition.
Reasons	
1. Change? This is our third manager in 18 months; and we are not feeling things are three-times better. Give it 6 months and things will change again.	1. Executive management has historically fixed performance problems before they have a negative effect on the employees. The employee acknowledges that the company as a whole has been doing very well. "We have been growing – due to good management decisions. I guess our department has just had some bad luck. The product we have been developing has enormous potential."
2. New boss, new processes, and new dynamics - doesn't executive management know how much time we are going to waste trying to figure out ways around his new processes.	2. The new manager is supposed to be great at pulling teams together. If he focuses on making the team better, then we can focus on developing processes that will make the product better.
3. New bosses usually bring their own employees. Is my job in jeopardy?	3. Our jobs are probably safe; the new manager doesn't know anyone from our industry or competitors. I will just focus on doing the same high quality job I have always done.

Employee #3

Old Perception	New Perception
Enough, is enough	Passionate about her new opportunity.
Reasons	
1. Her heart is just not into the working through the change. She is not passionate about her work.	1. She is passionate about working with children. A career change would truly make her happy. She has been considering starting a day care business working for herself.
2. She would prefer having more personal control over her career and future. But she is concerned about her financial security.	2. The company stock price has been climbing recently making her stock options valuable enough to seed her new venture. She has decided to follow her dream and is looking forward to being self-employed. She is excited about owning the responsibility for her own success.

His Predecessor

Old Perception	New Perception
"This is MY Team"	I will be happier in my new role.
Reasons	
<p>1. He has been with the company 17 years, but was only promoted to director 9 months ago. Managing a high-profile team was considered the natural progression to advancing his career.</p>	<p>1. He was personally asked by the president of the company to remain with the group and focus on product development. Originally an engineer, he feels a career as a high-performance individual contributor will earn him the recognition and compensation he desires.</p>
<p>2. Due to the growth of the department, he had to hire 40% of the team. Executive Management simply did not give him enough time to learn how to develop and unify his team.</p>	<p>2. Although he had hired a many of the department's employees, directing the individuals to work as a team was challenging. His new responsibilities are more in line with his personal experience and skill set. He feels that he may not have spent enough time learning to manage people.</p>
<p>3. He knew what needed to be done. The goals set for his organization were well defined. But, it was very difficult to get it done while learning his new responsibilities and managing the daily activities of the team.</p>	<p>3. He is excited about leaving the headaches of trying to make his people be productive and efficient to his new boss. He will now be able to focus on the more enjoyable parts of working for the company.</p>