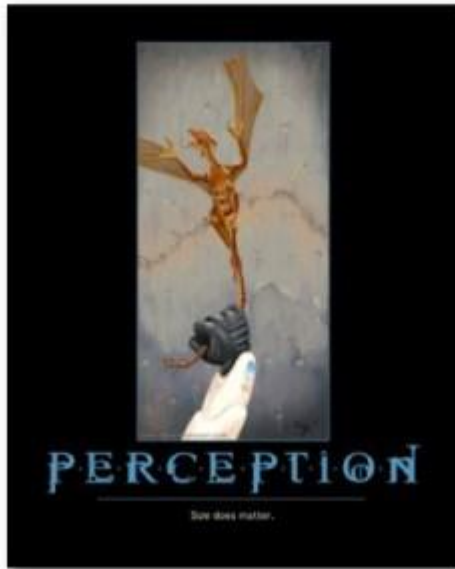


# Leaders: How Do You Manage Perception?

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Positive

We have all heard the phrase “that perception is reality.” Perception is how people tend to operate and behave in the world, based on what they believe to be true. For leaders, what people observe or assess as your ability and your effectiveness as a leader becomes their reality about you (their perception). And what sets great leaders apart from average ones is the ability to manage perceptions.

Perceptions that are not managed become rumors, then gossip, then backstabbing, which is destructive for an organization’s environment. Unmanaged perception becomes a truth that was not intended. So, as leaders if you want to communicate successfully, influence, or lead people, you must understand how you are perceived so you can change perception.

- **Get feedback.** Find out what others perceive about you by asking for feedback from people you trust and spend some time on self-reflection. If you do not know how you are perceived, you cannot change things. Building self-awareness though, involves courage and commitment. So be open to constructive criticism as this helps with understanding your own strengths and weaknesses.
- **Let your leadership actions match your words every single time.** Especially now when employee confidence in organizations might have been shaken, leaders need to motivate and act with conviction. You need to continually communicate the reasons behind your decisions, especially the difficult ones. Do not forget to follow-through on your actions because without follow-through, this can lead to a negative perception of you as untrustworthy.

- **Be aware of the effect you have on others.** Are your employees happy when you visit their work area or do they dread it? Know the effect that stress has on you and how this looks to others. Most importantly, be visible at strategic moments, both the good and bad. Be around to give explanations and answer questions when bad news is delivered but also celebrate alongside your staff during good times.

If people do not perceive you as their leader, they will not treat you as such and will not follow you. If they will not follow you, you cannot be effective. How do you manage perception?