

PERCEPTION

Perception is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting, and organizing sensory information. The word perception comes from the Latin perception-, *percepio*, , meaning "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses.

According to Stephen P Robbins, Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. The term originated from a Latin word ‘*percepio*’ meaning receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses.

Perceptual Process

Perception is composed of six processes

viz.,receiving, selecting, organizing, interpreting, checking, and reacting to stimuli.

- ***Process of Receiving Stimuli***

The human organism is structured with five sensory organs, viz., vision, hearing, smell, touch and tasting. There is We receive stimuli through the organs. Secondary organs receive not only physical objects; they receive events or objects that have been repressed. We may not be able to report the existence of certain stimuli but our behaviour reveals that we are often subject to their influence.

- ***Process of Selecting Stimuli***

Myriads of stimuli seemingly claim for our attention at any given time. We need to filter or screen out most of them so that we may deal with the important or relevant ones. Two sets of factors govern the selection of stimuli: external and internal.

External Factors Influencing Selection

The external factors influencing selection are:

- **Nature:** By nature we mean, whether the object is visual or auditory, and whether it involves pictures, people or animals, sound, music etc.
- **Location:** The best location of a visual stimulus for attracting attention is directly in the front of the eyes. A stimulus situated at an appropriate location (to attract the attention of the perceiver) has higher chances of getting selected for perception
- **Intensity:** Stimuli of higher intensity are perceived more than the objects with low intensity. A loud noise, strong odour, or bright light will be noticed more than a soft sound, weak odour, or dim light.
- **Size:** Generally objects of larger size attract more attention than the smaller ones. The maintenance engineering staff may pay more attention to a big machine than to a small one, even though the smaller one costs as much and as important to the operation.
- **Contrast:** The contrast principle states that external stimuli which stand out against the background, or which are not what people are expecting, will receive their attention.
- **Movement:** The principle of motion states that a moving object receives more attention than an object that is standing still.

- **Repetition:** The repetition principle states that a repeated external stimulus is more attention drawing than a single one.
- **Novelty and Familiarity:** The novelty and familiarity principle states that either a novel or a familiar external situation can serve as an attention getter. New objects in familiar settings or familiar objects in new setting will draw the attention of the perceiver.

Internal Factors Influencing Selection

Internal factors influencing selection of stimuli include learning, psychological needs, age differences, interests, ambivalence, and paranoid perception. These factors relate to oneself.

- **Learning:** Learning, a cognitive factor, has considerable influence on perception. It creates expectancy in people. People tend to perceive what they want to perceive.
- **Psychological Needs:** Needs play a significant role in perceptual selectivity. Unreal things often look real because of deprived needs.
- **Age:** Older senior executives complain about the inability of the new young to take tough decisions concerning terminating or resigning people and paying attention to details and paper work. The young managers in turn complain about the “old guards” resisting change and using paper and rules as ends in themselves. Different perceptions of old and young executives are due to their age differences perceptions.
- **Interest:** The interests of the perceiver unconsciously influence perception. An architect will notice many details of buildings that he passes only once. It has been argued that, in their influence on perception, interests cannot be distinguished from needs. That is, the person with a particular interest has a need to involve himself in activities pertaining to it. Yet there is some value in conceiving the two as distinct. Once they have been satisfied, most needs no longer influence perception. But if the person has a special interest, his perception is likely to be selective at any time.
- **Ambivalence:** Another factor in perceptual selection is ambivalence or mixed feelings about a situation. **Ambivalence** is a state of having simultaneous conflicting reactions, beliefs, or feelings towards some object. It is the experience of having an attitude towards someone or something that contains both positively and negatively valenced components. The term also refers to situations where "mixed feelings" of a more general sort are experienced, or where a person experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness
- **Paranoid Perception:** When the person's perception is so selective that he can find little common ground for communication with others, he is likely to be paranoid. Paranoid perceptions and behavior may appear as features of a number of mental illnesses, including depression and dementia.

- ***The Organizing Process***

The perceptual selection is related to the discussion of external and internal factors which helped gain the perceiver's attention. This aspect of forming bits of information into meaningful wholes is called the perceptual organization. There are three dimensions to the perceptual organization, viz., figure ground, perceptual grouping, and perceptual constancy.

- **Figure Ground:** Figure ground is considered to be the most basic form of perceptual organization. The figure ground principle states that the relationship of a target to its background influences perception. It is a type of perceptual grouping which is a vital necessity for recognizing objects through vision. It relates to or denotes the perception of images by the distinction of objects from a background from which they appear to stand out, especially in contexts where this distinction is ambiguous. Following are a few examples:



- **Perceptual Grouping:** There is a general tendency among individuals to group several stimuli together into a recognizable pattern. There are certain underlying uniformities in grouping. When simple constellations of stimuli are presented to people, they tend to group them together by closure, continuity, proximity, and similarity.
- **Closure:** An individual may perceive a whole while one actually does not exist. The person's perceptual process closes the gaps that are unfilled by sensory inputs. In a formal organization, employees may either see a 'whole' that does not exist or not be able to put the pieces together into a 'whole' that does exist.
- **Continuity:** Individuals tend to perceive continuous lines/patterns. This leads to inflexible thinking on the part of organizational members (both managers and employees). Thus, only the obvious, continuous patterns or relationships are perceived.
- **Proximity:** A group of stimuli that are close together will be perceived as a whole pattern of parts belonging together. For example, several employees in an organization may be identified as a single group because of physical proximity. Several workers who work on a particular process may be viewed as a single whole. If the output is low and the supervisor reports a number of grievances from the group, the management may perceive that all the workers working on that particular process are trouble makers whereas in some of them might be loyal and dedicated employees.
- **Similarity:** The greater the similarity of stimuli, the greater is the tendency to perceive them as a common group. Similarity is conceptually related to proximity but in most cases stronger than proximity. In an organization, all workers wearing uniforms may be perceived as a common group, when in reality, each employee is a unique individual.

- ***The Process of Interpreting***

After the data have been received and organized, the perceiver interprets or assigns meaning to the information. In fact, perception is said to have taken place only after the data have been interpreted. Several factors contribute towards what has been interpreted. More important amongst them are

- **Perceptual Set**:- Previously held beliefs about objects influence an individual's perceptions of similar objects. This is called perceptual set.
- **Attribution**:- Attribution refers to the process by which the individual assigns causes to the behaviour he conceives. There are critics who argue that perceptual distortion occurs because of attribution. As too much credit or blame for behaviour is placed on persons rather than on environment. Factors such as status, intentions, and consequences influence the attribution process.
- **Stereotyping**:- Stereotyping is the tendency for a person's perceptions of another to be influenced by the social group to which the others belong.
In perceiving another, a person is likely to categorize the other according to some silent characteristic such as sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation, or organizational affiliation.
The individual's experiences with others in the category in which he has placed them lead him to believe that they have certain traits in common. Thus, he is ready to perceive the other as possessing the same trait.. For example, if dishonesty is associated with politicians, we are likely to assume that all politicians are dishonest.
- **Halo Effect**:- The halo effect refers to the tendency of perceiving people in terms of good and bad, and ascribing all good qualities to one who is liked and all bad qualities to another who is disliked.
- **Perceptual Defence** :- According to the principle of perceptual defence, an individual is likely to put up defence when confronted with conflicting, unacceptable and threatening stimuli. The defence mechanisms put up by the perceiver may assume any of the four forms: outright denial, modification of the data received, change in perception but refusal to change, and change in perception itself.

- ***The Process of Checking***

After data have been received and interpreted, the perceiver tends to check whether his interpretations are right or wrong. One way of checking is for the person himself to indulge in introspection. He will put a series of questions to himself and his answers will confirm whether his perception about an individual or an object is correct or not. Another way is to check the veracity about the interpretation with others.

- ***The Process of Reacting***

The last phase in perception is the reaction. The perceiver shall indulge in some action in relation to his perception. The action depends on whether the perception is favorable or unfavorable. The action is positive when the perception is favourable. It is negative when the perception is unfavourable. The cycle of perception is not complete unless it leads to some action as listed below:

(a) Covert action: It refers to take action in the form of the formation of opinions or attitudes of an individual person

(b) Overt action: It refers to a definite action in relation to the perception.

PERCEPTION AND ITS APPLICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

People in organizations are always assessing others. Managers must appraise their subordinate's performance, evaluate how co-workers are working. When a new person joins a department he or she is immediately assessed by the other persons. These have important effect on the organization.

Employment Interview: Interviewers make perceptual judgments that are often inaccurate. Different interviewers see different things in the same candidate and arrive at different conclusions about the applicant. Employment interview is an important input into the hiring decision, and perceptual factors influence who is hired and vis-à-vis the Quality of an organization's labour force.

Performance Appraisals: An employee's performance appraisal is very much dependent on the perceptual process. An employee's future is closely tied to his or her appraisal - promotions, increments and continuation of employment are among the common outcomes. The performance appraisal represents an assessment of an employee's work. While this may be objective most jobs are evaluated in subjective terms. Subjective measures are judgmental. The evaluator forms a general impression of an employee's work, to the degree that managers use subjective measures in appraising employee's the evaluator perceives to be 'good or bad' employee characteristics/behaviors will significantly influence the appraisal outcome.

Assessing Level of Effort: In many organizations, the level of an employee's effort is given high importance. Assessment of an individual's effort is a subjective judgment susceptible to perceptual distortions and bias.

Assessing Loyalty: Another important judgment that managers decide about employees is whether they are loyal to the organization.

Implications of Perception on Performance and Satisfaction

Productivity: What individuals perceive from their work situation will influence their productivity. More than the situation itself than whether a job is actually interesting or challenging is not relevant. How a manager successfully plans and organizes the work of his subordinates and actually helps them in structuring their work is far less important than how his subordinates perceive his efforts.

Therefore, to be able to influence productivity, it is necessary to assess how workers perceive their jobs.

Absenteeism and Turnover: Absence and Turnover are some of the reactions to the individuals perception. Managers must understand how each individual interprets his job and where there is a significant difference between what is seen and what exists and try to eliminate the distortions. Failure to deal with the differences when individuals perceive the job in negative terms will result in increased absenteeism and turnover.

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is a highly subjective, and feeling of the benefits that derive from the job. Clearly his variable is critically linked to perception. If job satisfaction is to be improved, the worker's perception of the job characteristics, supervision and the organization as a whole must be positive.