Perception

Perception is an intellectual process of transforming sensory stimuli to meaningful information. It is the process of interpreting something that we see or hear in our mind and use it later to judge and give a verdict on a situation, person, group etc.

It can be divided into six types −

- Of sound − The ability to receive sound by identifying vibrations.

- Of speech − The competence of interpreting and understanding the sounds of language heard.

- Touch − Identifying objects through patterns of its surface by touching it.

- Taste − The ability to receive flavor of substances by tasting it through sensory organs known as taste buds.

- Other senses − They approve perception through body, like balance, acceleration, pain, time, sensation felt in throat and lungs etc.

- Of the social world − It permits people to understand other individuals and groups of their social world. Example − Priya goes to a restaurant and likes their customer service, so she will perceive that it is a good place to hang out and will recommend it to her friends, who may or may not like it. Priya's perception about the restaurant is good.

Definition of perception:
- Perception is what and how we understand the other. We can understand the meaning ofperception from the following definitions:
- "A process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order togive meaning to their environment" – Stephen P. Robbins.
- "Perception is an important meditative cognitive process through which persons makeinterpretations of the stimuli's or situation they are faced with" – Fred Luthans

Components of perception:
Stimuli- The receipt of information is the stimulus, which results in sensation. Knowledge andbehaviour depend on senses and their stimulation. The physical senses used by people are vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste. These senses are influenced by a larger number of stimuli, which may be action, information, consideration and feelings, etc. The stimuli may be in the form of objects or physical commodities.

Attention- Stimuli are selectively attended to by people. Some of the stimuli are reacted to while others are ignored without being paid any attention. The stimuli that are paid attention depend purely on the people's selection capacity and the intensity of stimuli. Educated employees pay more attention to any stimuli, viz. announcement of bonus, appeal for increasing productivity, training and motivation.

Recognition- The recognition process is dependent on mental acceptance. For example, if a car driver suddenly sees a child in front of his running car, he stops the car. He recognises the stimuli, i.e. the life of the child is in danger. His mental process recognises the danger after paying attention to the stimuli. If the does not pay attention to the stimuli, he recognises the danger. After recognising the stimuli, he translates the message into behaviour.

Translation- The stimuli are evaluated before being converted into action or behaviour. The evaluation process is translation. In the above example, the car driver after recognising the stimuli uses the clutch and brake to stop the car. He has immediately translated the stimulus into an appropriate action. The perception process is purely mental before it is converted into action.

Behaviour- Behaviour is the outcome of the cognitive process. It is a response to change in sensory inputs, i.e. stimuli. It is an overt and covert response. Perceptual behaviour is not influenced by reality, but is a result of the perception process of the individual, his learning and personality, environmental factors and other internal and external factors at the workplace.

Performance- Proper behaviour leads to higher performance. High performers become a source of stimuli andmotivation to other employees. A performance-reward relationship is established to motivate people.

Satisfaction- High performance gives more satisfaction. The level of satisfaction is calculated with the difference in performance and expectation.

Factors determining perception:
Perception is influenced by various factors. They are divided into internal and externalfactors. They are explained below:

External Attention Factors
  a. Intensity
  b. Size
  c. Contrast
  d. Repetition
  e. Motion
  f. Novelty and familiarity

Intensity- The intensity of stimulus implies that the more intense the stimulus, audio or visual, themore is the likelihood it will be perceived. A loud noise, strong odour or bright light or bright colours will be more readily perceived than soft sound, weak odour or dim light. It is because of thisadvantage that advertisers employ intensity to draw the consumers' attention.

Size- As regards the size of the stimulus, any odd size attracts attention. A Great Den dog which istall attracts the attention. At the same time a pocket dog also attracts attention because of its size. However, generally the larger the object the more likely it will be perceived.

Contrast- The contrast principle states that external stimuli, which stand out against the background or which, are not what the people expect will receive attention. Plant safety signs, which have black lettering on a red background, gain attention.

Repetition- The factor of repetition implies that a repeated external stimulus attracts more attention than the one that occurs at one time alone. Perhaps, it is because of this that supervisors tend to repeat directions regarding job instructions several times for even simple tasks to hold the attention of theirworkers. Advertisers while putting T.V. or radio advertisements repeat the brand name they are advertising.

Motion-The factor of motion implies that the individual attend to changing objects in their field of vision than to static objects. It is because of this advantage that advertisers involve signs, which include moving objects in their campaigns.

Novelty and familiarity- A novel object in the familiar situation or a familiar object in a novel situation tends toattract attention. Thus a white or a black in India catches attention faster.

Internal set Factors

The internal set factors are as under:
  a. Habit
  b. Motivation and interest
  c. Learning
  d. Organisational role and specialization:

Habit- A Hindu will bow and do Namaskar when he sees a temple while walking on the road, because of his well-established habit. The motor set may cause the likelihood of inappropriate responses.

Motivation and interest- Two examples of motivational factors are hunger and thirst. Motivational factors increasethe individual's sensitivity to those stimuli, which he considers as relevant to the satisfaction of his needs in view of his past experience with them. A thirsty individual has a perceptual set to seek a water

fountain or a hotel to quench his thirst, which increases for him the likelihood of perceiving restaurant signs and decreases the likelihood of visualizing other objects at that moment of time.

Principles of perception:
Perception has various principles also. They are as follows:
There are several kinds of primitive perceptual organisations, which include grouping, closure, figure-ground effect and constancy phenomenon.

Perceptual grouping- The grouping principle of perceptual organisation states that there is a tendency to group several stimuli together into a recognizable pattern. The principle is very basic and seems largely inborn. In the visual fields, we find that objects that are similar in appearance tend to be grouped together. Likewise, the individual tends to create a whole even when it is not there.

Closure- The closure principle of grouping is closely related to the gestalt school of psychology. The principle is that a person will sometimes perceive a whole when one does not exist. The person's perceptual processes will close the gaps that are unfilled from the sensory inputs.

Figure-ground-The objects are perceived with reference to their background. The figure-ground principle means simply that perceived objects stand out as separable from their general background. Whenthe reader is reading this paragraph, in terms of light-wave stimuli, the reader perceives patches of irregularly shaped blacks and whites. Yet the reader perceives the shapes as letters and figures printed against the white background. In other words the reader perceptually organizes these stimuliinto recognizable patterns i.e. the words.

Perceptual constancy- Constancy is one of the more sophisticated forms of perceptual organisation. It gives a person a sense of stability in a changing world. This principle permits the individual to have some constancy in a tremendously variable world.

Impression Management- Whereas social perception is concerned with how one individual perceives other individuals,impression management (sometimes called "self-presentation") is the process by which people attempt to manage or control the perceptions others form of them. There is often a tendency for people to try to present them in such a way as to impress others in a socially desirable way. Thus, impression management has considerable implications for areas such as the validity of performance appraisals (is the evaluator being manipulated into giving a positive rating?) and a pragmatic, political tool for one to climb the ladder of success in organisations.

Perceptual Process
Perceptual process are the different stages of perception we go through. The different stages are −
- Receiving
- Selecting
- Organizing
- Interpreting

Receiving
Receiving is the first and most important stage in the process of perception. It is the initial stage in which a person collects all information and receives the information through the sense organs.

Selecting
Selecting is the second stage in the process. Here a person doesn't receive the data randomly but selectively. A person selects some information out of all in accordance with his interest or needs. The selection of data is dominated by various external and internal factors.

- External factors − The factors that influence the perception of an individual externally are intensity, size, contrast, movement, repetition, familiarity, and novelty.

- Internal factors − The factors that influence the perception of an individual internally are psychological requirements, learning, background, experience, self-acceptance, and interest.

Organizing

Keeping things in order or say in a synchronized way is organizing. In order to make sense of the data received, it is important to organize them.

We can organize the data by −
- Grouping them on the basis of their similarity, proximity, closure, continuity.
- Establishing a figure ground is the basic process in perception. Here by figure we mean what is kept as main focus and by ground we mean background stimuli, which are not given attention.
- Perceptual constancy that is the tendency to stabilize perception so that contextual changes don't affect them.

Interpreting

Finally, we have the process of interpreting which means forming an idea about a particular object depending upon the need or interest. Interpretation means that the information we have sensed and organized, is finally given a meaning by turning it into something that can be categorized. It includes stereotyping, halo effect etc.

Perceptual Errors- A perceptual error is the inability to judge humans, things or situations fairly and accurately. Examples could include such things as bias, prejudice, stereotyping, which have always caused human beings to err in different aspects of their lives. Perceptual error has strong impact in organisation and it hampers in proper decision making skill while hiring, performance appraisal, review, feedback etc

There are many types of perceptual errors in workplace:

1.Selective Perception- People generally interpret according to their basis of interests, idea and backgrounds. It is the tendency not to notice and forget the stimuli that cause emotional discomfort. For example we might think that fresher graduates with above 80 % marks will exceptionally do well in technical interviews of respective subjects

2.Halo Effect- We misjudge people by concentrating on one single behavior or trait. It has deep impact and give inaccurate result most of the time. For example we always have an impression of a lazy person can never be punctual in any occasion.

3.Stereotypes- We always have a tendency to classify people to a general groups /categories in order to simplify the matter. For example-Women are always good homemakers and can do well in work life balance

4.Contrast Effect- We again sometimes judge people in comparison to others . This example generally found in sports, academics and performance review

5.Projection- This is very common among Perceptual errors. Projection of one's own attitude, personality or behavior into some other person. For example- To all honest people, everybody is honest.

6.Impression- We all know the term "first impression is the last impression" and we apply that too .For example-During the time of hiring, thought like this "The most decent and modest person in the interview can do very well in every roles and responsibilities " always arise.

Importance of Perception in OB

We need to understand what the role of perception in an organization is. It is very important in establishing different role of perceptions like −

- Understanding the tasks to be performed.
- Understanding associated importance of tasks allotted.
- Understanding preferred behavior to complete respective tasks.
- Clarifying role perceptions.

For example, every member in a group has to be clear regarding the role allotted to them. Programmer writes the code, tester checks it, etc.