



by M. Chris Wingate

Perception is reality. We've all heard this phrase; and most of us have likely used it at some point in time. When leaders use the phrase "perception is reality" they are likely making assumptions about others without taking the time to learn if the perception is accurate. This phrase is rooted in a lack of humility and needs to be removed from our lexicon once and for all.

According to psychologists, a more accurate phrase is "perception is my reality." Leaders often use "perception is reality" as a heuristic due to either being too busy or uninterested in asking additional questions to understand what's really going on. Having the maturity to ask questions and determine why takes time, patience, and humility.

Said a different way, perception is reality is a leader's inability or lack of interest in understanding the character or motives of the individual in question. I'm guilty of it. I've used it in the past as a junior officer and I honestly did not think much of it at the time.

Unconsciously I thought, “My boss said it, so I’m going to say it because he (or she) is successful, and I want to be like them someday.” So, we emulate those who have gone before us and inadvertently display the same lack of humility while never taking a step back to explore what we’re really saying to our subordinates.

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