

PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

It is often a difficult task for people to differentiate between their perceptions and reality. Our perceptions are a lens through which we view the world and influence how we focus on, process, remember, interpret, understand, and act on reality.

As railroaders, it is crucial to utilize clear and concise communication. Accurately conveying the intent and purpose of rules and instructions to employees will improve their understanding of safety rules and overall work performance. If complete understanding of rules, directives, and communications is attained, managers' and employees' perceptions can merge.

When perceptions between management and employees align, great things become achievable:

- A high level of trust between leaders, managers, and employees is fostered
- A sense of teamwork is developed across all levels of the railroad
- Miscommunications and misunderstandings, which may lead to human error incidents, are greatly reduced and overall safety performance is improved

Here are a few tips to keep in mind regarding perceptions:

- Don't assume that your perceptions are reality (they are just your reality)
- Be respectful of others' perceptions (they may be right!)
- Don't hold your perceptions too tightly; they may be wrong (admitting it takes courage)
- Recognize the biases within you that may warp your perceptions
- Challenge your perceptions (do they hold up under the microscope of reality?)
- Seek out validation from experts and credible others (don't just ask your friends, because they likely have the same perceptions as you)
- Be open to modifying your perceptions if the evidence demands it