

# WHAT'S THEIR REALITY?

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EVERYONE LOOKS AT THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR OWN EYES AND EXPERIENCES. WHEN LEADING OTHERS IT IS NOT OUR PERCEPTION OF REALITY THAT MATTERS, IT'S THEIRS!

**P**eople will not follow us if they cannot make sense of what we ask of them. How they connect our requests to their version of reality is critically important.

## The problem

As a leader in our business it is our purpose and role to move the business forward to improved levels of performance and profitability. Nothing stays the same, nor can it. Somewhere out there is a competitor, who is running hard to take away your customers, to make you uncompetitive, and to improve their own lot in life at the expense of your business and employees.

Conversely, if we have a good look in the mirror and ask ourselves about how well our business is performing, we will always find a way to improve it. Our safety processes, training, customer service, sales activities, product design and financial performance. There is always a way to tune and improve the business.

Our role is to make these changes in order to keep ahead of competitors, reach the next level of improvement and build a sustainable business model.

Doing all of this by ourselves is just not possible. Just the same as it is impossible for us to fulfil the entire suite of job functions in our

**“Aim for success, not perfection. Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward with your life.”**

**Dr David M. Burns.**

business from accounting, design, production, etc. Without our employees' input it is impossible for us to make all the changes necessary to build this sustainable business.

We need our employees to participate in helping us understand what the specific issues and ideas are that are holding the business back from the next level of performance. Likewise, we need our employees to actively think and create new ideas to improve the business functions.

Our employees' perspective is important to generate insights about the business. Our employees' buy-in is ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE to implement both the activities they create and the activities and strategies we develop.

Here is the killer issue. Everyone's perception

about the problems, solutions and opportunities is different. Everyone's perception of reality is unique to them.

How do you achieve one outcome, when every individual is in a different place, with different thoughts?

## The four attributes of the good, bad, stop, start matrix

### Good

Pretty simply, this is an activity or task that we are undertaking (or have in mind to start), whose PRIMARY impact produces a positive benefit for the business.

### Bad

Again rather simply, this is a task whose PRIMARY impact appears to be negative for the business.

Is it possible for a task to have both positive and negative impacts? Absolutely!

This problem of an activity having both positive and negative impacts is one of the key drivers behind why sensible, prudent actions fail to be performed.

### Stop

Tasks that we would like to stop doing are marked down in this half of the matrix.

The good, bad, stop, start matrix.

**“Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.” Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955).**

#### Start

No rocket science here either. Tasks that we would like to do, but are not currently doing, fall into this category of the matrix.

#### How do I use this to move the business forward?

##### Meet & greet

This can be a small-group process, or if you have a small organisation, an individual conversation. The process is to sit down with the people in the business and ask them what their actions, activities and results are in the business and where do they fit within the four quadrants of the matrix.

We want them to tell us how they perceive reality. What are the things that we do that have a negative impact on the organisation and should be stopped? What could we start to do that would have a positive impact? How? Why would it be positive?

What are the things we do that have a good outcome, but we don't like, or want to stop doing because there is a negative impact elsewhere?

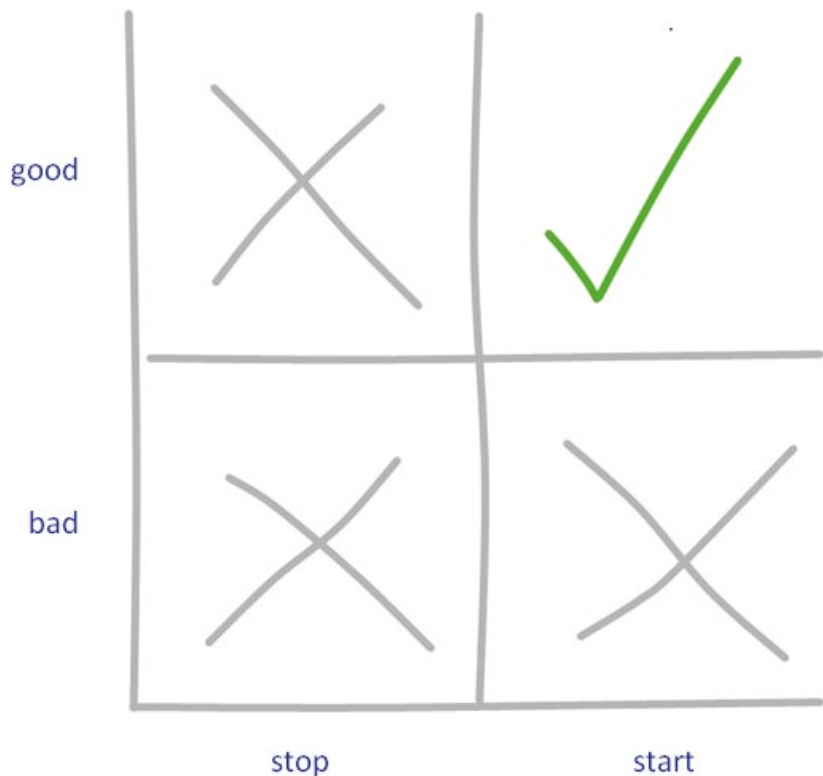
Go through the matrix with people and use this to create greater insights about how to move your business forward. You will probably also understand why some of the things that you see as important (good) don't get done. This is because negative impacts on others also are occurring.

Plot their jobs task on the matrix to build a model of activities in your business that describes their perception of reality as it applies to the business.

#### Communication

Using the insights from your team you can now see their perception of reality about the business.

Communicate to your employees using their current perceptions as a base from which to work (this builds rapport – and shows you value their input). In your communications, you can then link to this base any perceptions of reality that are new to them, in order to align their current perceptions with a desired outcome or perception of the organisation. For example, link their perception about the quality checks they do with the customer's perception of the product quality (of which they may be completely unaware). You could link the uptime



**“Set up as an ideal the facing of reality as honestly and as cheerfully as possible.” Dr Karl Menninger (1893 - 1990).**

of a piece of equipment to the delivery date performance of the business. This can then be further linked to the financial performance of the organisation.

#### Put it into practice

Up until now, we have some insights but probably no great performance improvement. Here are the four steps to using this to improve your business sustainability.

1. Expand and align people's perception of the business situation. (Meet & greet, communication). Link the exact task you want them to undertake to their current perception of reality to improve the reality as they now see it.
2. Stop doing the task that have negative impacts and no positive features.
3. Modify the tasks that have good and bad impacts to eliminate the negative side effects.
4. Start doing the good tasks immediately!

I used this with a business unit I ran and it took me 11 weeks, meeting in groups of about six people, to have the 'Good, Bad, Stop, Start' conversation with all 600 people.

This was incredibly valuable in helping me see the world through their eyes and then craft a message and a plan to link their actions to the

outcome that they now wanted for the business.

The results? An eight-figure turnaround in profitability within three years without investment.

#### Dangers and pitfalls

##### Perfectionism

You will never achieve 100% agreement or 100% acceptance of reality amongst your team. If this is your goal it will take you a long, long time and you don't actually need it. We do need to have critical mass of the people in order to rapidly move forward. We do not need everyone.

##### Rushing

Almost the exact opposite of perfectionism is rushing. If we go straight to a conclusion without people making that link between their perception of reality and the task they are being asked to perform we will lose them. When people are lost, they become confused, frustrated, and often will do nothing. Small doses repeated often and consistently help people continue on the journey.

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