



THE RAINBOW

*S*ince time immemorial, the splendour of a rainbow has fascinated humans. They have spent countless hours trying to understand how such beautiful colours could appear in the sky. Sunlight shining through raindrops in the air is first refracted, then reflected off the back of the drops. The coloured light emitted from the drops is what we see. A rainbow is always directly opposite the sun. To see it, you have to be in line with and have your back to the sun, at the midpoint of the rainbow's circle. That's why it's impossible to reach the end of a rainbow.

YOUR PERCEPTION DEFINES YOUR REALITY

As impressive as it is, this natural phenomenon is simply an optical illusion; a rainbow only exists depending on the observer's location. Someone facing the sun would see nothing. Reality is therefore perceived differently by each person, depending on his or her point of view. While one person might declare with certainty that something exists, another, who sees it from a different angle, will deny it with as much conviction.

To demonstrate this, let me tell you about an incident that happened with our family. Some time ago, I was driving with my wife, France, and our son, Alex. Up ahead, at the traffic lights, we could see a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant. Knowing that Alex liked to eat at this fast-food chain from time to time, we asked him if he wanted to stop at the Kentucky Fried Chicken. "Where is it?" he asked. As the restaurant was right in front of us and impossible to miss, we told him to stop kidding and give us an answer. He came back at us with "What are you talking about?" France and I were becoming impatient because the light had just turned green. "Alex! Decide, quickly!" In a firm tone, he said that he honestly didn't know what we were talking about. "The restaurant right there in front of us! KFC! There! How can you not see it?" "Oh! You're talking about KFC! Of course I do!" At that moment, we realized that, to Alex, this restaurant has always been "KFC." When France and I were his age, the sign outside these restaurants always bore the full name, "Kentucky Fried Chicken," so out of habit, that's what we still call them. But today, the franchise is branded by the letters KFC, and that's how Alex knows it. To him, the restaurant we named didn't exist, even if it was right in front of his eyes.

PUT YOURSELF IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

When you set a goal, you'll inevitably have to convince people, negotiate agreements, and solicit support. Other people often have to be brought into the plan, and they won't necessarily have the same vision as you. In your discussions, remember the rainbow principle. Ask questions to get a better understanding of the point of view of the person you're talking to, put yourself in his place, and listen to what he says. To be persuaded, a person must at least accept your arguments or, better still, be so convinced that he buys into them. For you to be able to convince someone, he must feel that his own arguments have been heard and understood.

ARE YOU TRULY LISTENING?

I've often watched two people with differing points of view engage in a dialogue of the deaf. Each is so involved in trying to convince the other, that neither one responds to what the other is saying, and the discussion makes no progress whatsoever. The reason is simple: we speak at a rate of about 125 words per minute, but we think at approximately 800 words per minute. The next time you have a conversation with someone, observe what you do. Are you listening attentively, motivated by a real desire to understand what the other person is saying? Or is your brain speeding along at 800 words per minute, intent on formulating your next response? If that's the case, rein in that infernal machine and concentrate on what you're hearing.

It's said that only ten percent of interpersonal communication involves words. I'm not sure of the exact proportion, but the tone of voice, circumstance, and body language often have far more impact than the words that are used. Make an effort to "hear"

everything that's not articulated in words but that's communicated in other ways. We're all able to do this, but we don't devote much effort to developing this ability. Yet, we've all had the experience of walking into a conflict situation and, without one word being said, immediately sensing what was going on because the atmosphere, climate, and tension were palpable. This is precisely the sense we have to develop if we want to have more effective exchanges with other people, especially if we've set ourselves daring goals.

Among my network of acquaintances is a man who has accomplished extraordinary things and who has become a global hero of sorts within his milieu. Of course, he has a thousand and one stories to tell, each more interesting than the next. The problem is that as soon as someone else tries to get a word in, he appropriates what this person says and turns it into a springboard for another of his own fascinating stories. After a while, this behaviour becomes frankly annoying, and listening to him becomes a chore. It gets very tempting to tell him that, though we may not be celebrities, we also have interesting things to say.

ARE YOU INTERESTING OR INTERESTED?

Most individuals feel that very few people take a real interest in them. It's understandable, then, that if you make a sincere effort to follow what others are saying, you become very interesting to them. On one hand, there are people who consider themselves interesting and who regale their listeners with stories about themselves without paying much attention to what anyone else has to say. On the other, there are those who take a genuine interest in others, who ask questions and actually listen to the answers. I think it would be fair to say that most of us prefer people who take an interest in us to those who seem to find themselves more interesting. That's something worth thinking about.

Now, Olivier will take you through a few exercises to help you develop your ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

THE THOUSAND AND ONE WAYS TO SEE A PROJECT

EXERCISES

If you belong to a work team and you want to develop a professional project, your colleagues' opinions may be at odds with each other, which may delay or even prevent the project from getting off the ground. Even in the case of a personal project, you may end up doubting its merits after gathering opinions that are different from your own.

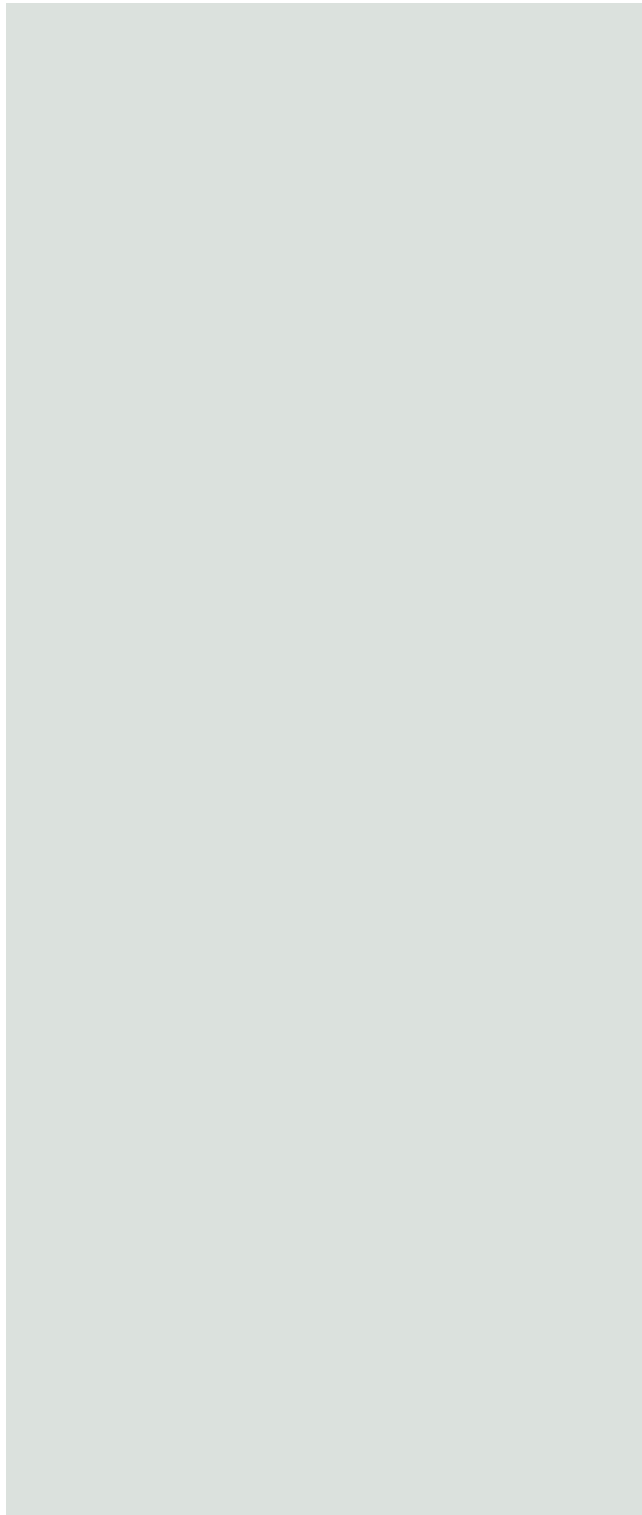
Make a list of the different points of view you might be offered in relation to your project, taking care to note the basis for each opinion. For example, *“Within the team, Paul thinks our project is bound to fail because he believes that the concept of the new product goes beyond our area of expertise,”* or *“Denis doesn’t think I should start a business because he’s convinced the time isn’t right.”*

IN HIS SHOES, I MIGHT BE OF THE SAME MIND

Establish the basis for views that conflict with your own and put yourself in the shoes of the people who hold them, keeping in mind the context in which they express them. It's unlikely that they're deliberately trying to displease you or put the brakes on your project. Those people undoubtedly have good reasons to offer a differing opinion, and putting yourself in their shoes will enable you to gain a better insight.

Examine these differing viewpoints by asking yourself how each one can improve your project.

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