天津外国语大学(天外)
Tianjin Foreign Studies University (TFSU)
Organizational Behaviour

Online class starts at 08:00

(Beijing Time, GMT+8)

Ivan Monich, PhD

April 06, 2023, week 07

Perceptions and Attributions

After completing this lecture, you should be able to:

- Describe the different stages of the perceptual process.
- Discuss the process of perceptual grouping.
- Compare the six potential inaccuracies that can result from perceptual grouping.
- Summarize how employees use attribution theory to explain the causes of events.
- Explain why and in what contexts impression management tactics are more commonly used.

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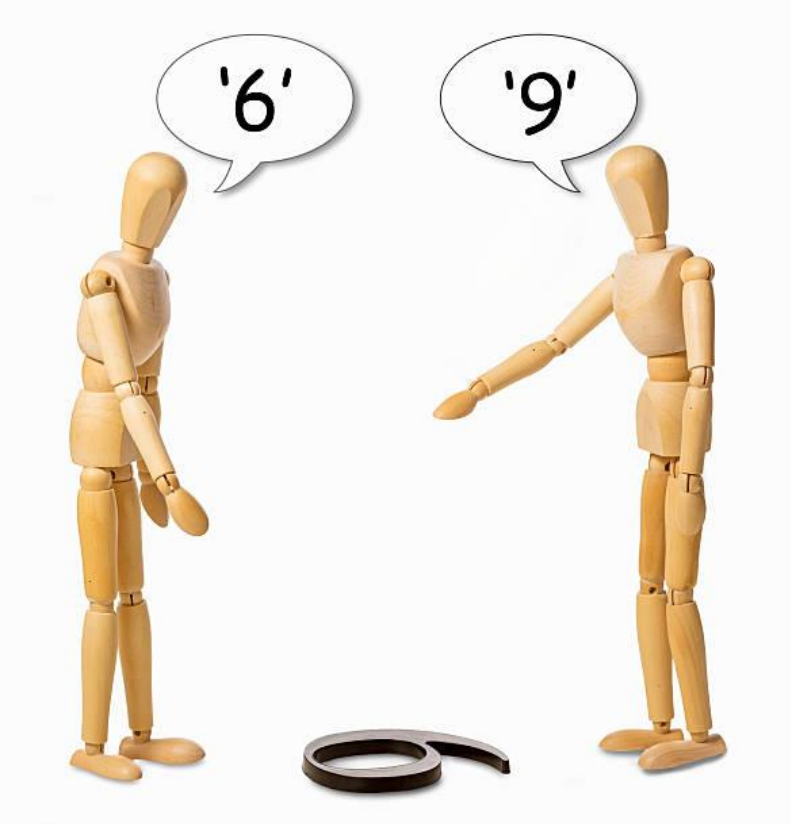
Introduction

Continuing the discussion of individual differences at work (see Lecture 4), employees frequently use their perception and make attributions on a daily basis. Two employees who work next to each other in the same department may perceive the same event (e.g., a colleague is terminated) or comment from their supervisor (e.g., “we’re going to have to start working more efficiently”) in vastly different ways. Similarly, employees make different attributions when they try to make sense of why things happen or why people behave in certain ways. The ways in which employees perceive things can affect their behavior at work, including their job satisfaction, performance, and turnover. While managers cannot directly assess an employee’s perception or attributions, they can try to understand each employee’s perspective and view of the work environment. Understanding these individual characteristics helps managers perform their roles and jobs more efficiently and more effectively.

perception
The process by which an individual gives meaning to environmental stimuli. It involves observing, selecting, and interpreting information.

The Perceptual Process

Perception is empirical in that it is based on prior experience. Perception is defined as the cognitive process by which an individual selects, organizes, and gives meaning to environmental stimuli. Through perception, individuals attempt to make sense of their environment and the objects, people, and events in it. Because each person gives his or her own meaning to stimuli, different individuals will "perceive" the same thing in different ways. When we comment to a classmate, "This course is exciting," what we really mean is, "This class excites me." While we think we are describing some objective reality, we are in fact describing our subjective reactions to that reality.



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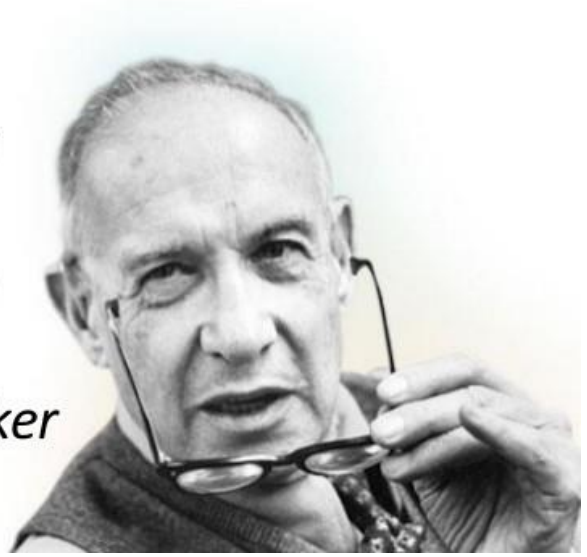
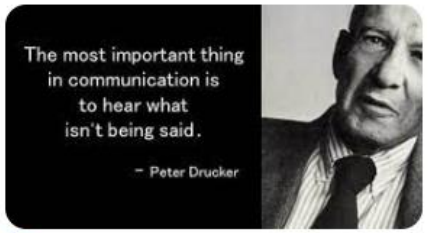
Peter Drucker quotes

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."
– *Dr. Peter F. Drucker*





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A-Z Quotes
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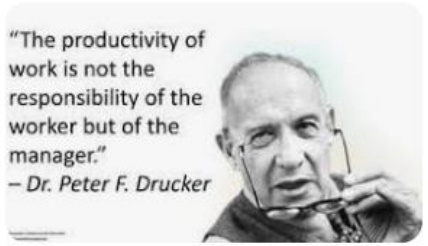

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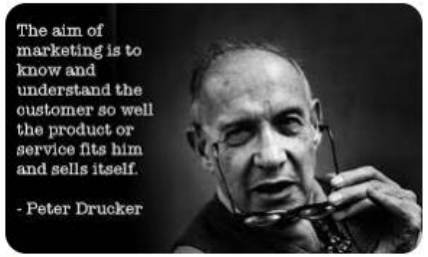

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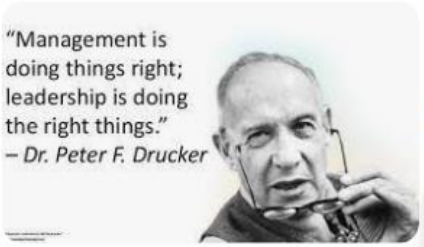

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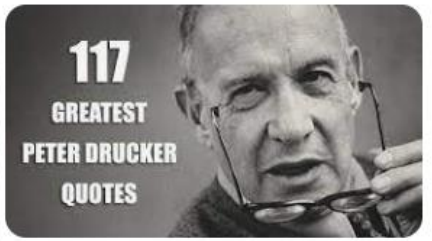

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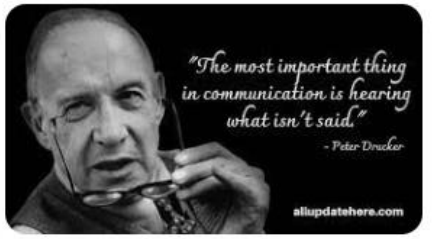

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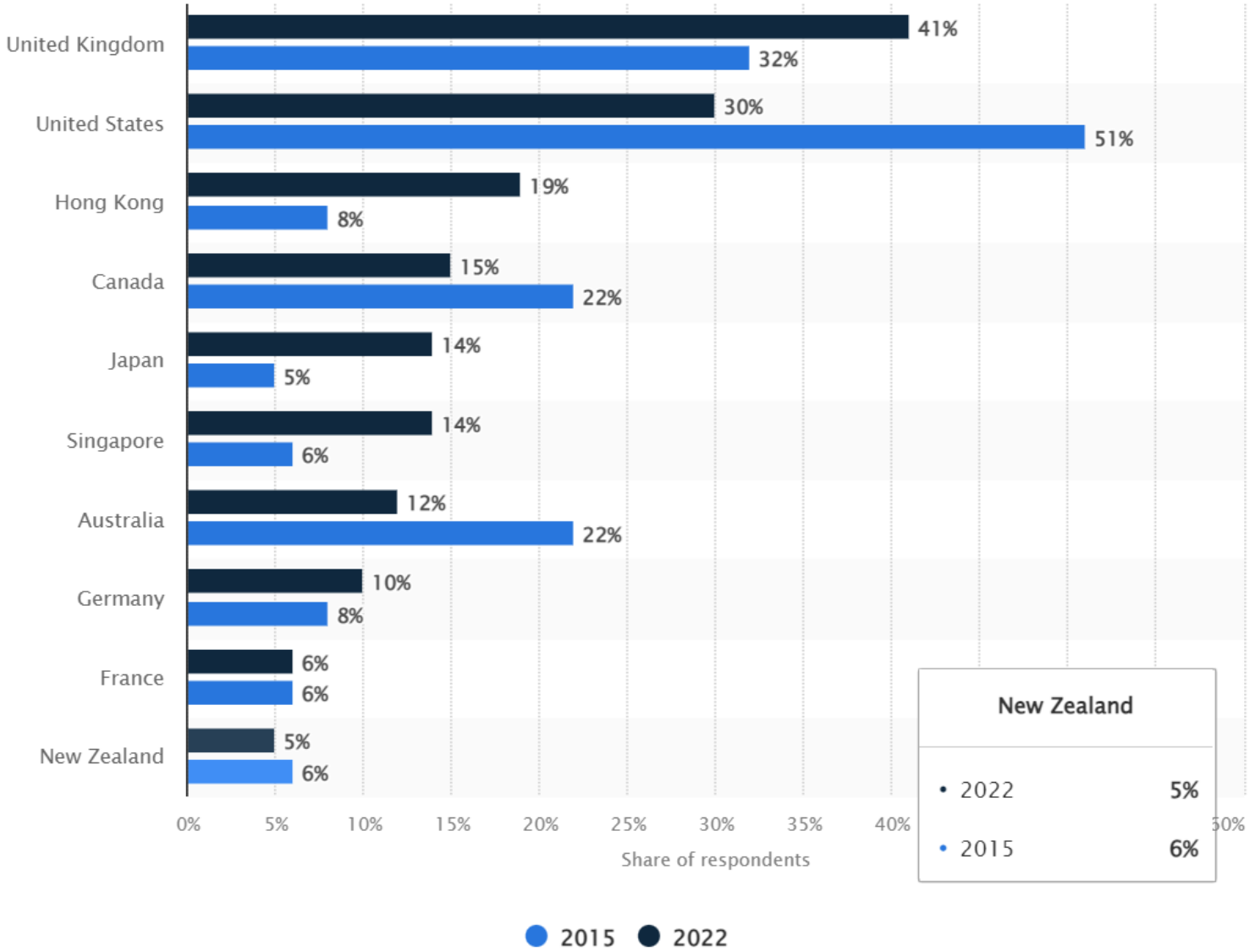

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Sources

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Release date

June 2022

Region

China

Survey time period

January and February 2022

Number of respondents

8,610 respondents in 2022

Special properties

multiple answers allowed

Method of interview

Questionnaire

EXHIBIT 1
The Perceptual Process: An Individual Interpretation

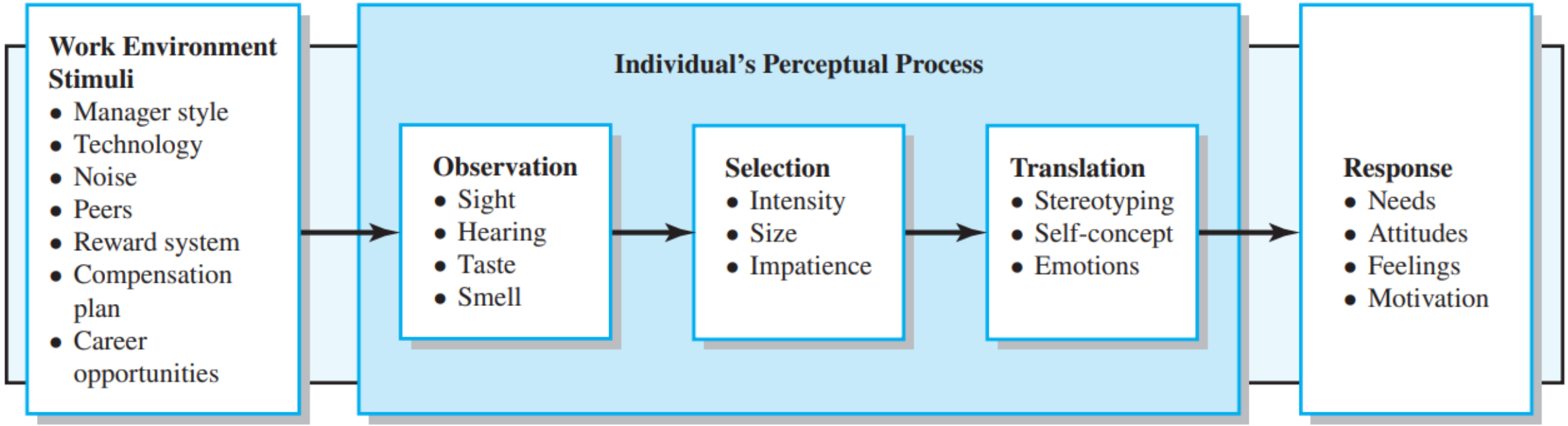
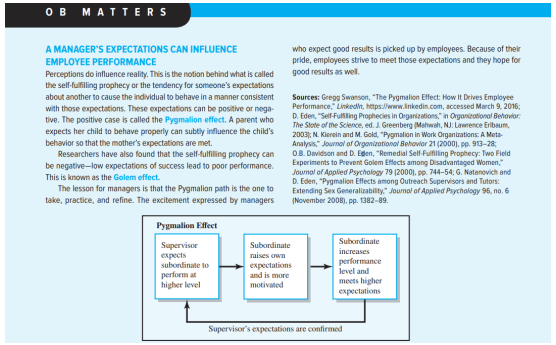


EXHIBIT 2
The Perceptual Gap between Supervisor and Subordinates

Source: Adapted from Rensis Likert, New Patterns in Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 91.

Types of Recognition	Frequency with which Supervisors Say They Give Various Types of Recognition for Good Performance	Frequency with which Subordinates Say Supervisors Give Various Types of Recognition for Good Performance
Gives privileges	52%	14%
Gives more responsibility	48	10
Gives a pat on the back	82	13
Gives sincere and thorough praise	80	14
Trains for better jobs	64	9
Gives more interesting work	51	3

Conclusion from the Perceptual Gap



OB MATTERS

A MANAGER'S EXPECTATIONS CAN INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Perceptions do influence reality. This is the notion behind what is called the self-fulfilling prophecy or the tendency for someone's expectations about another to cause the individual to behave in a manner consistent with those expectations. These expectations can be positive or negative. The positive case is called the **Pygmalion effect.** A parent who expects her child to behave properly can subtly influence the child's behavior so that the mother's expectations are met.

Researchers have also found that the self-fulfilling prophecy can be negative—low expectations of success lead to poor performance. This is known as the **Golem effect.**

The lesson for managers is that the Pygmalion path is the one to take, practice, and refine. The excitement expressed by managers who expect good results is picked up by employees. Because of their pride, employees strive to meet those expectations and they hope for good results as well.

Sources: Gregg Swanson, "The Pygmalion Effect: How It Drives Employee Performance," *LinkedIn*, https://www.linkedin.com, accessed March 9, 2016; D. Eden, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecies in Organizations," in *Organizational Behavior: The State of the Science*, ed. J. Greenberg (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003); N. Kierein and M. Gold, "Pygmalion in Work Organizations: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000), pp. 913–28; O.B. Davidson and D. Eden, "Remedial Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Two Field Experiments to Prevent Golem Effects among Disadvantaged Women," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 79 (2000), pp. 744–54; G. Natanovich and D. Eden, "Pygmalion Effects among Outreach Supervisors and Tutors: Extending Sex Generalizability," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96, no. 6 (November 2008), pp. 1382–89.

Managers and their employees "view" the world, stimuli, and organizational programs differently and from various perspectives. Understanding that subjective perceptions are going to differ must be understood within work environments. The manager has a responsibility to manage within a framework that permits and respects perceptual differences to be voiced without fear or impatience. The OB Matters illustrates how a manager's positive or negative expectations can impact the performance of employees.

Pygmalion effect
A self-fulfilling prophecy that causes a person to behave in a positive manner to meet expectations.

Golem effect
A self-fulfilling prophecy that causes a person to behave in a negative manner to meet low expectations.

5-minute break

Have you experienced the Pygmalion or Golem effects at your working place (part-time job, traineeship)?

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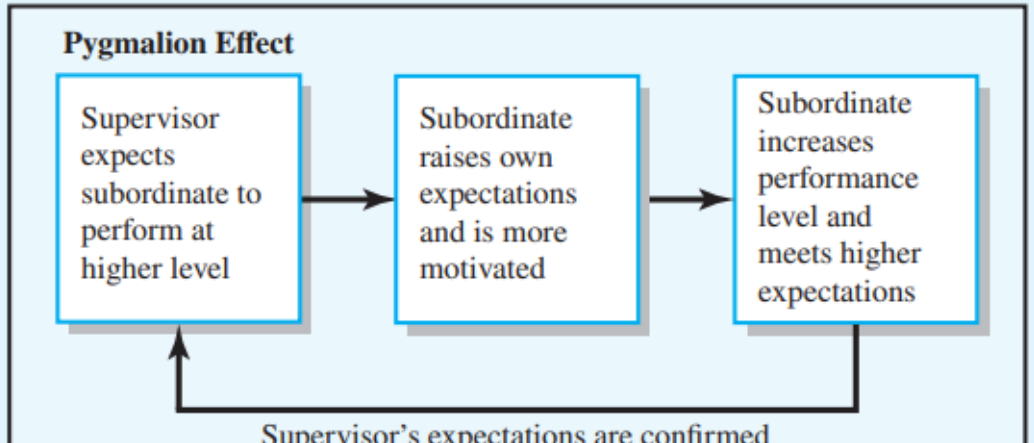
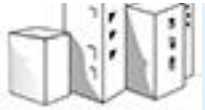


Golem effect
A self-fulfilling prophecy that causes a person to behave in a negative manner to meet low expectations.



2007574042李弈乐LiYile

Pygmalion: In the field of education, when teachers have high expectations for their students, it can lead to improved academic performance. Conversely, if teachers have low expectations, students may perform poorly.

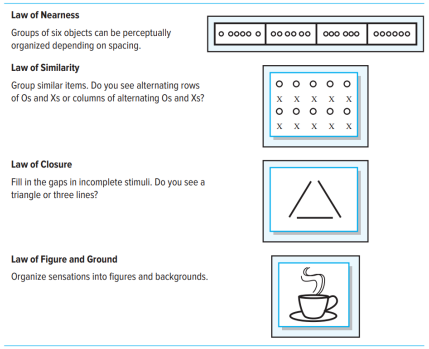
Yile Qin 2007574055

If teachers trust that their students have potentials and have high expectations on them, students will perform better and the teaching results will be good.

2007574042李弈乐LiYile

Golem: When a teacher believes that a student is unintelligent, they may spend little time teaching them and not provide special attention or support. This low expectation may cause the student to feel frustrated and helpless, ultimately resulting in decreased performance.

Perceptual Grouping



Once relevant stimuli are selected, individuals categorize and group them so that they will make sense. The brain receives stimuli and seeks to recognize common patterns. This is a way of organizing sensations and applies to perceptions of people, objects, or events. Exhibit 3 presents the laws of perceptual grouping.

- The law of nearness—all other things being equal, stimuli that are near each other tend to be grouped together.
- The law of similarity—stimuli that are similar in size, color, shape, or form tend to be grouped together.
- The law of closure—the tendency to complete a figure, so that it has a consistent overall form.
- The law of figure and ground—the tendency to group sensations into figures and backgrounds.

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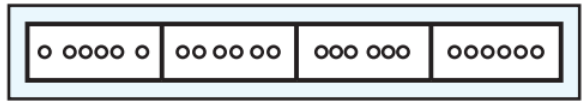
EXHIBIT 3 Four Different Types of Perceptual Groupings

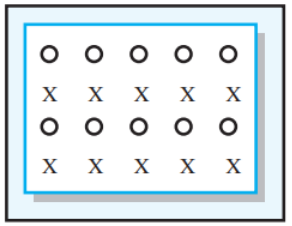
Law of Nearness

Groups of six objects can be perceptually organized depending on spacing.



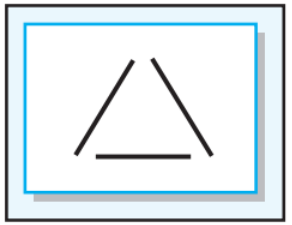
Law of Similarity

Group similar items. Do you see alternating rows of Os and Xs or columns of alternating Os and Xs?



Law of Closure

Fill in the gaps in incomplete stimuli. Do you see a triangle or three lines?



Law of Figure and Ground

Organize sensations into figures and backgrounds.

Useful schemas for managers

A person who creates faulty groupings faces a number of different types of perceptual inaccuracies or distortions. Individuals engaging in grouping also use what are referred to as schemas. A schema is a framework embodying descriptions of people, situations, or objects. Like everyone, managers use schemas to make better sense of information. A number of useful schemas for managers are:

- Person-based: Managers employ a profile schema of the characteristics of good, poor, and outstanding employees. The schema is used to compare current employees and job candidates.
- Role-based: These are judgments about the roles people play or can play. For example, some managers may perceive that an older employee doesn't have enough energy to travel around the world overseeing various projects. This perception may be erroneous and biased. Certainly not all older people have low energy levels.
- Self-based: Individuals generalize about their own prowess, competencies, and preferences based on a current or previous experience.
- Events-based: Managers develop a script or story about the events they are facing. For example, the creation of a script for conducting a difficult performance feedback session would help the manager prepare for the meeting.

EXHIBIT 4
Factors that Decrease Perceptual Accuracy

Factor	How Decrease in Perceptual Accuracy Affects Manager Effectiveness
Stereotyping and prejudice	Managers who rely on racial, gender, or ethnic stereotypes will not be able to capitalize on diversity management.
Selective/divided attention	When managers are overly focused on one issue or are busy multitasking, they'll tend to perceive less information and rely more on stereotypes.
Halo effect	Managers' evaluations of job applicants or subordinates' performance may be biased leading to lower quality decisions.
Similar-to-me errors	Managers who focus too much on employees who possess similar qualities may not use the employees in effective ways.
Situational factors	Managers who hold certain attitudes or are under time pressures to meet deadlines may make quick judgments about people or situations.
Needs and desires	Managers who have a high need for control, power, or recognition will tend to perceive events and others' actions related to those needs.

Information You Can Use

STEREOTYPES 101

1. Remember that stereotypes are by definition based on little or inaccurate information.
2. Always be willing to change or add information that will improve the accuracy of any of your stereotypes.
3. Understand that apply stereotypes rarely apply accurately to a specific individual. Judgments based on personal knowledge of a specific person are always more accurate than using a broad category to which that person belongs.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a translation step in the perceptual process employed to assist individuals in dealing with massive information-processing demands. It represents a useful, even essential, way of categorizing individuals (or events, organizations, etc.) on the basis of limited information or observation. Stereotyping may occur not only as a result of direct interaction with an individual, but may also be the result of a reaction to a label or name.

stereotyping
A translation step in the perceptual process that people use to classify or categorize events, people, or situations.

prejudice
A stereotype that doesn't change even when information disputing it is presented.

Two sources of prejudice

- Allport concluded that there are two sources of prejudice. Personal prejudice occurs when members of another group (e.g., work group, race, age cohort) are perceived as a threat to one's own interest. Group prejudice occurs when a person conforms to norms of a group she belongs to. For example, key members of a work unit dislike managers. You may have no personal reason for disliking managers; however, your group expects you to follow the group's position and you may go along.
- Although it is often assumed that stereotyping is inherently bad or wrong, this is not always the case. Stereotyping can be a useful process in that it can greatly increase our efficiency in making sense out of our environment. Nonetheless, stereotyping can and does lead to perceptual inaccuracies and their negative consequences. To the extent that stereotypes create social injustice, result in poorer decision making, stifle innovation, or cause underutilization of human resources, they contribute to ineffectiveness and inefficiency. For example, employers' stereotypes regarding disabled workers may be an important source of the employment problems these workers frequently experience. Inaccurate stereotypes include beliefs that disabled workers lack job-related abilities, have lower performance levels, and have higher absenteeism and turnover rates. Objective data, on the other hand, consistently reveal that these stereotypes are false.

Selective and Divided Attention

Selective attention refers to the fact that people give some messages priority and put others on hold. Psychologists refer to selective attentiveness as a bottleneck or narrowing in the information channel linking the senses to perception.16 When one message enters the bottleneck zone, it seems to prevent others from passing through. This may be why it is difficult to listen to two or more colleagues talking at once. Divided attention occurs when a person must divide his or her mental efforts among tasks, each of which requires some amount of attention (multitasking). Research suggests that when individuals are distracted by multiple demands, they will be more likely to engage in stereotypes.

halo effect
In perception it occurs when a person allows one important factor or characteristic to bias his or her view, impression, or evaluation.

Halo Effect

The halo effect occurs when a person (e.g., manager) allows one important or noticeable characteristic of another person to bias the evaluation, perception, or impression of that person. An employee who is always at work before everyone else arrives or after they leave may be assumed to be productive and hard working. On the other hand, employees with excessive body art and piercings may be perceived in a negative light. Both of these judgments made by a manager utilize the halo effect and may be erroneous.

similar-to-me errors
Using yourself as a benchmark against which others are judged.

Similar-to-Me Errors

People frequently use themselves as benchmarks in perceiving others. This can give rise to similar-to-me errors. One's own characteristics may affect the characteristics identified as present or lacking in others. Research suggests that knowing oneself well makes it easier to see others accurately. Also, persons who accept themselves are more likely to see the favorable aspects of other people

Situational Factors

The press of time, the attitudes of the people a manager is working with, and other situational factors all influence perceptual accuracy. If a manager is pressed for time and has to immediately fill an order, then her perceptions will be influenced by these time constraints. The press of time literally will force the manager to overlook some details, to rush certain activities, and to ignore certain stimuli such as requests from other managers or from superiors.

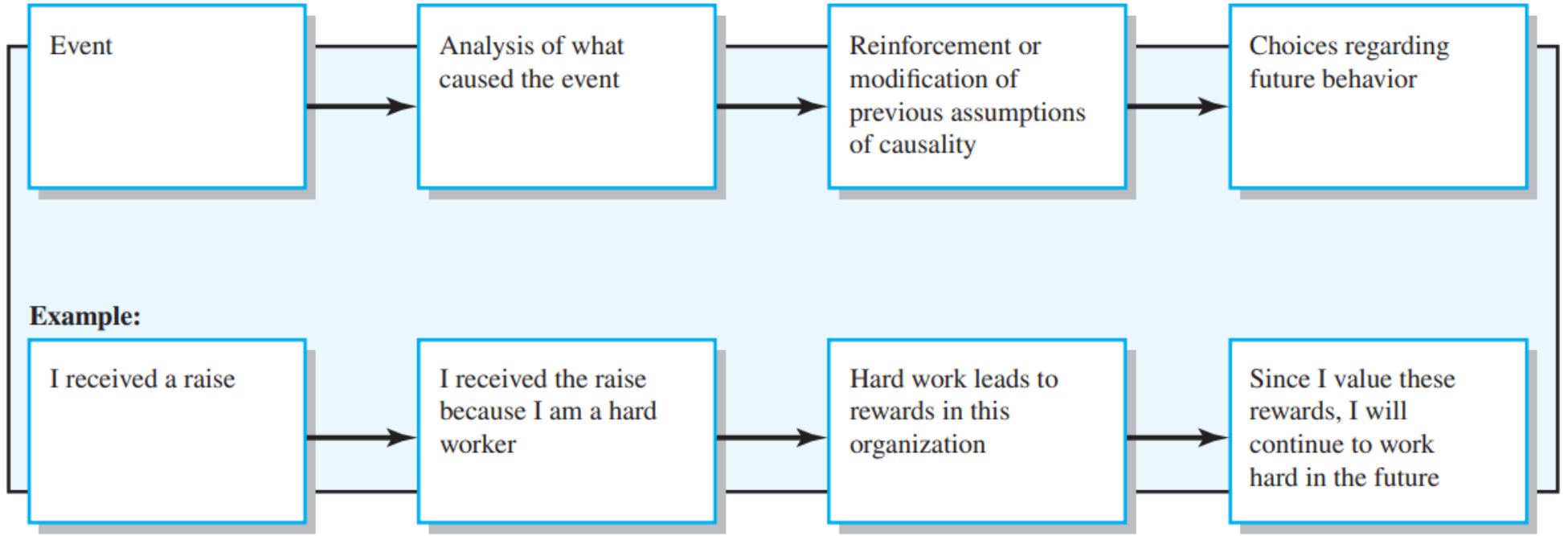
Needs and Desires

Perceptions are influenced significantly by needs and desires. In other words, the employee, the manager, the vice president, and the director see what they want to see.26 For example, an employee who works only the hours required of her (and declines to stay late on weekdays or come in on weekends) may be seen as lacking commitment by a manager who frequently puts in extra hours. A co-worker who knows the employee is taking care of her elderly parents, sees her differently—as a hard worker who's good at juggling work and home demands.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory views the process by which individuals interpret events around them as being caused by (attributed to) a relatively stable portion of their environment. Exhibit 5 displays the attribution process.

Source: Adapted from Abraham Korman, *Organizational Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977), p. 273.



attribution theory
A process by which individuals attempt to explain the reasons for events.

distinctiveness
In attribution theory the degree to which a person behaves similarly in different situations.

consistency
In attribution theory the degree to which a person engages in the same behaviors at different times.

consensus
In attribution theory the degree to which other people are engaging in the same behavior.

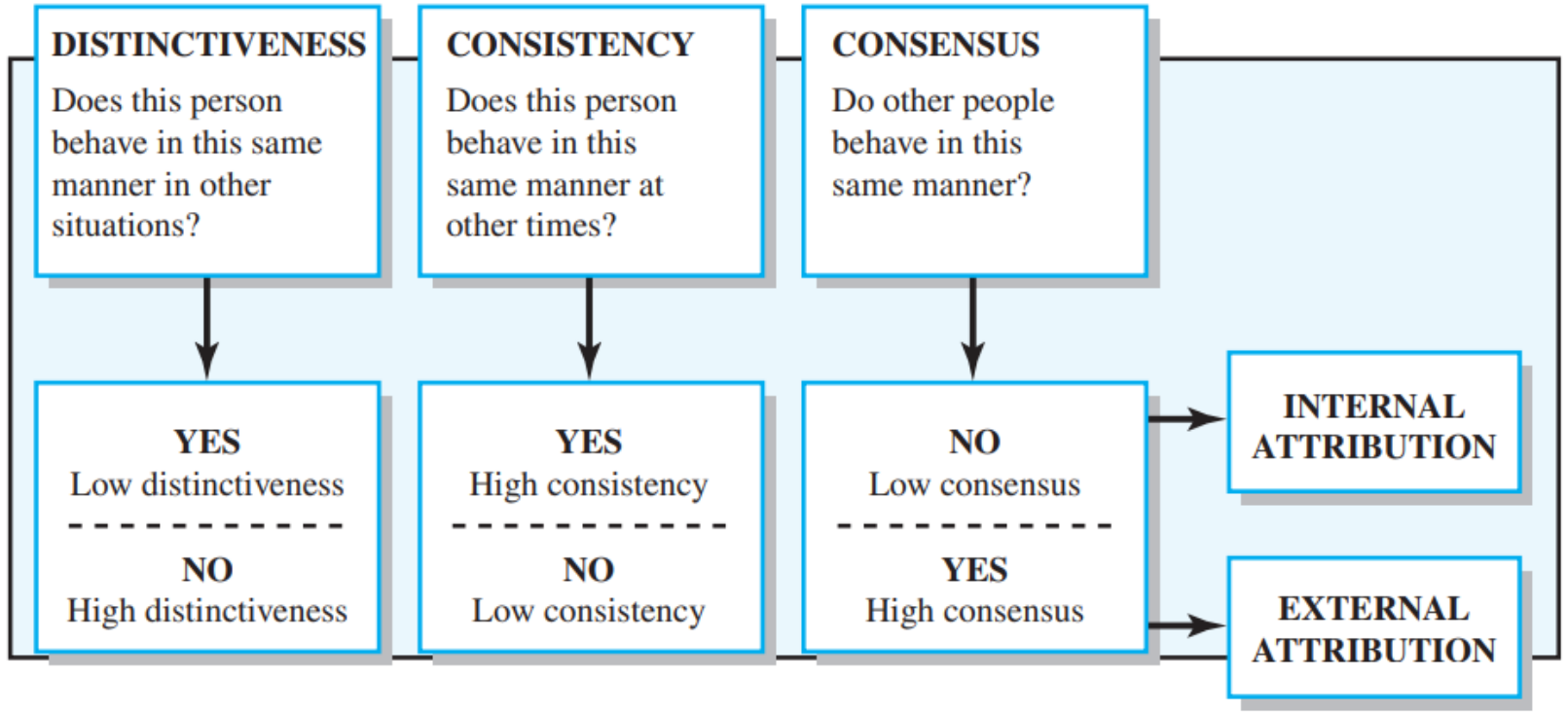
EXHIBIT 6
Internal and External Attributions

internal attribution
Tendency to assume that events are caused by factors within a person's control.

external attribution
Tendency to assume that events are caused by factors outside of a person's control.

fundamental attribution error
Tendency to underestimate the importance of external factors and overestimate the importance of internal factors when making attributions about the behavior of others.

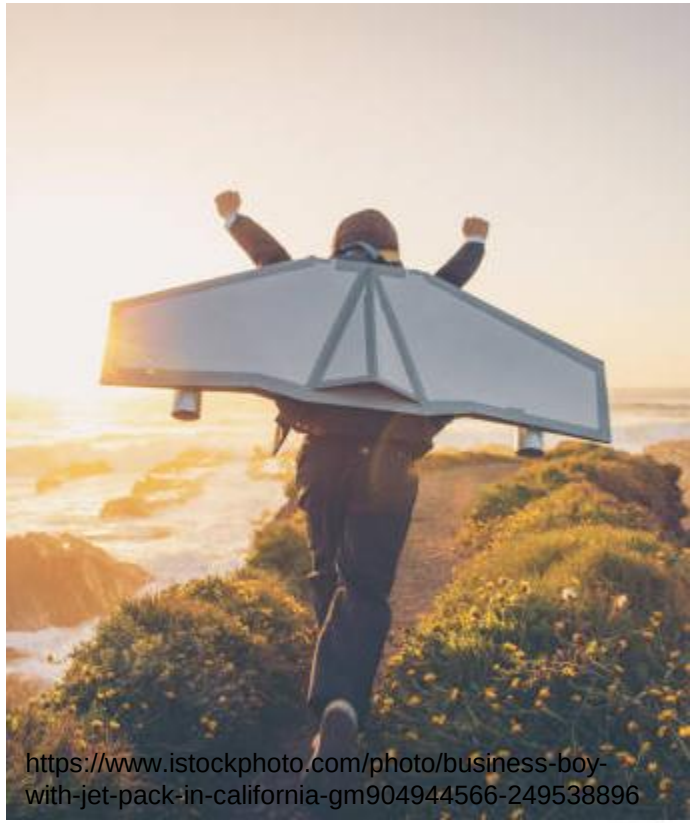
self-serving bias
Tendency to take credit for successful work and deny responsibility for poor work.



impression management
The attempt to influence others' perception of you.

Fake it until you make it… Impression Management

Through actions, body language, and manner of speaking, individuals attempt to influence the perceptions that others have of them. The attempt to influence others' perceptions of oneself has been called impression management. Managers manage impressions of themselves by how they talk, their overall style, their office location and furniture, and even by the individuals they select as employees. The range of managers' techniques for creating and sustaining a particular impression of themselves is very wide.



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An Interpersonal Process

Goffman proposed that impression management is a kind of theatrical process. When a person is in the presence of others, there is a reason to mobilize resources, style, and creativity to make a positive impression. The process occurs at first contact, but also over the course of a long-term relationship.

Individuals (managers and nonmanagers) engage in impression management for numerous reasons. First, to interact socially, impression management allows the person to communicate a desired identity. Once the identity is established, the individual tries to remain congruent with the impression—or face cognitive dissonance. The audience (manager, colleagues, or customers) respects the desired identity and attempts to comply with the impression being conveyed.

YOU BE THE JUDGE

PERCEPTIONS CAN GET THE WRONG PERSON HIRED

Most job applicants try hard to make a good impression during interviews. Some applicants, by presenting themselves in a certain way, encourage hiring managers to perceive them as better qualified than other applicants competing for the same job. While some of these individuals are indeed better qualified, it is reasonable to assume that some of these applicants are simply better at "acting qualified" during the interview process.

What does the research say? Interviewees who are attractive and professional in appearance, engage in impression management tactics (e.g., self-promotion and ingratiation), and communicate well (verbally and nonverbally) tend to receive higher interview ratings, which presumably lead to more job offers. The problem occurs later when it becomes apparent that hiring managers allowed some of these individuals to talk their way into jobs for which they were not fully qualified. While self-presentation is a strong predictor of higher interviewer ratings, it is only modestly predictive of job performance. When this mismatch occurs, the employee may end up leaving (or being terminated from) the organization, which leads to a costly and time-consuming process to find a replacement.

What can hiring managers do to make better selection decisions? How can they decrease the amount of influence that applicants' self-presentation and impression management tactics have on their selection decisions?

Sources: Laszlo Bock, "Here's Google's Secret to Hiring the Best People," *Wired,* http://www.wired.com, accessed March 9, 2016; Paul Falcone, "How to Interview Job Candidates: Ask the Right Questions," *Monster.com,* http://hiring.monster.com, accessed March 9, 2016; M. Barrick, J. Shaffer, and S. DeGrassi, "What You See May Not Be What You Get: Relationships Among Self-Presentation Tactics and Ratings of Interview and Job Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 6 (2009), pp. 1394–1411.

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One approach is to gather multiple perspectives on each candidate by involving others in the selection process, such as colleagues or team members who will work closely with the candidate. These individuals may bring different insights and perspectives to the evaluation process, which can help identify factors that may not have been apparent during the interview.

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Managers can add some tests on professional knowledge regarding to the job.

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2007574041Sun Zhuxuan

HR can take training courses to learn hiring from sophisticated supervisors

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a hiring manager can ask multiple candidates questions at the same time or assign them a short-term project to complete together. They may prefer this method over individual interviews if the job position is in a high-energy work industry like food service, as it can streamline the process.

A Model and Impression Management in Practice

Organizational researchers have proposed various impression management frameworks. The one framework that has been carefully examined empirically is offered by Jones and Pittman. According to Jones and Pittman, individuals engage in five impression management tactics:

1. Ingratiation: They seek to be viewed positively by flattering others or offering to do favors for them.
2. Self-promotion: They tout their own abilities and competence.
3. Exemplification: They seek to be viewed as dedicated by going above and beyond the call of duty.
4. Supplication: They seek to be viewed as needing help because of limitations.
5. Intimidation: They seek to be viewed as powerful and threatening.

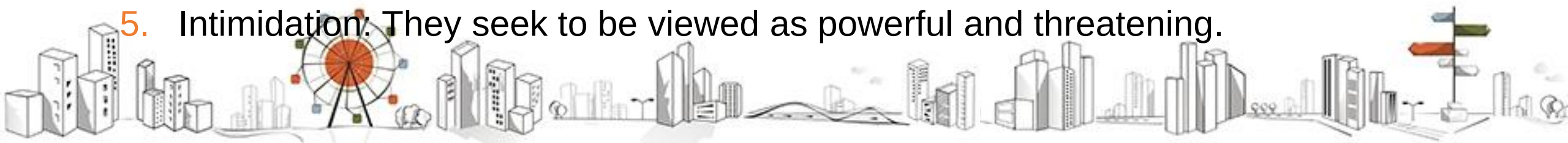

EXHIBIT 7 What Job Applicants Say to Generate a Positive Impression of Themselves

Source: Adapted from C.K. Stevens and A.L. Kristof, "Making the Right Impression: A Field Study of Applicant Impression Management during Job Interviews," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 80 (1995), pp. 587–606.

IM Tactic	Description	Frequency of Use (%)
Self-promotion	Positively describing oneself (e.g., "I work hard every day").	100%
Personal stories	Describing the past in a puffed-up way (e.g., "I solved the most difficult problems").	96
Opinion conformity	Expressing beliefs that are assumed to be held by another person (e.g., "I agree with your statement").	54
Entitlements	Claiming responsibility for successful past events (e.g., "My work led to the securing of the contract").	50
Enhancement of another	Making comments that compliment another person (e.g., "I've been so impressed with your work accomplishments").	46
Overcoming obstacles	Describing success despite obstacles that should have lowered performance (e.g., "I won the award even though I had to work three different jobs").	33
Justifications	Accepting some responsibility, but denying the negative implications (e.g., "We lost over 30 percent of the market, but the economy went sour for everyone").	17
Excuses	Designating responsibility for one's actions (e.g., "I missed the deadline because two of my team members had the flu").	13

YOU BE THE JUDGE COMMENT

Hiring managers can avoid some of the perceptual pitfalls that occur when conducting interviews by being aware of how they react to applicants' appearance and physical attractiveness, use of impression management tactics, and communication ability. For example, if you find yourself asking easier or fewer interview questions of physically attractive job applicants because you assume they'll be good at the job in question, then you may be letting a halo effect influence your decision making. All applicants should be interviewed in a similar and consistent manner.

Hiring managers can increase the validity of their selection decisions by using structured interviews. Structured interviews are based on job analyses, ask the same questions of all job applicants, have benchmark scoring, and are more predictive of job performance. In contrast, research suggests that hiring managers who rely on unstructured interviews that vary from one candidate to the next have a higher probability of being influenced by job applicants' self-presentation tactics.

Another way to protect against perceptual bias is to use two or more interviewers when assessing the qualifications of job applicants. Multiple interviewers are beneficial because the perceptual "blind spots" of one interviewer can be offset by the other(s).

In addition to structured interviews, job applicants should be assessed on other valid predictors of job performance such as job experience, general mental ability, or conscientiousness. Though they are a very popular method of selection, the results of structured interviews should be combined with applicants' scores on these other selection methods. This multiple hurdle approach should help improve hiring managers' selection decisions.

Summary of Key Points

- Perception is a process that involves selection, organization, and interpretation of environmental factors, from shapes to people and other stimuli. Through the perceptual process, individuals attempt to make sense of the stimuli they receive. ·
- Once stimuli are selected they are categorized into groups according to a number of laws: nearness, similarity, closure, simplicity, and figure and ground. Grouping makes the interpretation and sense-making process easier. It doesn't, however, eliminate inaccuracies or distortions.
- Stereotyping can help a person organize perceptions. However, if it contributes to prejudice, bias, or discrimination it can be problematic.
- Some of the distortions in perception occur because of selective and divided attention, the halo effect, similar-to-me errors, and situational factors.
- Attribution theory attempts to explain the relationship between perception and behavior by investigating how people attribute events to causes.

Thank you