

The three perceptual positions

To be an effective leader, you need to have strong social awareness and relationship management skills, 2 Emotional Intelligence competencies. A powerful tool for skillfully and effectively increasing your empathy and managing relationships - with your team members, customers, employees, members, etc. – especially when there is a bit of conflict, is perceptual positions.

In order to be effective working with and influencing other people, it's critical to empathize with, and understand, their perception of things, their reality. Their reality is almost always different from our own, but we often lose sight of that. One way to think about this is that we each have our own map of reality in our heads. My mental map is different from yours because our maps are heavily influenced by our assumptions, desires, values, upbringing, experiences, ambitions, pressures, personality types, and the like. And our map of reality has a huge impact on how we interact with others.

This tool, Perceptual Positions, is one of the most simple and powerful ways to expand your map of reality and empathy which will assist you in becoming a more emotionally intelligent leader and getting better results and outcomes. Common situations in which this can be helpful include meetings, difficult relationships, someone you want to influence.

Through this tool, we can improve our abilities to look at situations from 3 different positions to enrich our maps and increase our awareness of the different realities that exist, and thereby, generate more options for managing these situations and achieving better outcomes.

Your perception of a situation depends on the position from which you view it.

So, think of a current relationship where you are not as resourceful and effective as you would like to be. Perhaps, you can remember the last time you met and wished it had gone differently. Now step into each position below, one at a time, asking yourself some of the questions listed for each position.

First position

Here, I'm looking at a situation from my own point of view, through my own eyes, focusing all my attention on what is happening to me

- What are you saying?
- What are you feeling?
- What are you seeing?
- What are you hearing?
- What's important to you?
- What do you want?
- What is your hypothesis about what is going on for them?

Shake it off...move to the next position

Second position

From here, I'm stepping into the shoes of the other person. I see the situation through their eyes, hear it through their ears, and feel it through their emotions (empathy).

What is the name of the person you are going to become? Imagine them walking in, imagine their clothes and the way they walk. Now let them walk out, and you can walk back in as them

- What are you noticing?
- What are you thinking?
- What is important to you?
- What do you want?
- What is working/not working for you?
- What are your feelings about the other person?
- What would you like to say to the other person?
- What would you like to ask of the other person?

Shake it off... move to the next position

Third position

This is the position of an independent, objective observer. It's as if I'm watching a movie, listening to what's being said and observing the reactions of both individuals.

- What do you notice?
- How would you describe their relationship?
- What seems to be most important to each person?
- What advice would you give to each person?

What insights did you get? What's an action you are willing to take as a result?