032 What the Operator Is Actually Seeing

Perspective Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/032-what-the-operator-is-actually-seeing/

The operator who believes they are reading their business objectively is not. They are reading it through a set of attentional filters that were set before they walked in — by the last conversation they had, the last number they saw, the most dramatic thing that happened this week, and the first assumption they formed about what is going on.

Attention Distortion runs at the Perspective level before it runs anywhere else. The read that produces the wrong diagnosis was corrupted upstream — not by bad data, but by the filters that determined which data registered and which disappeared.

Anchoring — the first number the operator encounters becomes the reference point for every subsequent judgment. The food cost that ran 31% last period anchors the operator's sense of what "normal" is. The lease rate quoted in the first negotiation anchors the operator's sense of what "reasonable" is. The salary the operator paid the last GM anchors what they expect to pay the next one. None of those anchors were chosen deliberately. All of them are steering decisions.

Salience Bias — the loudest signal in the building gets the most attention. The Guest who complained loudly. The cast member who created a visible problem. The week that went badly. The dramatic event that redirected three weeks of operator attention. Meanwhile the quiet signals — the Guest who stopped coming, the cast member who is slowly disengaging, the standard that is drifting at a rate too slow to notice — register at the edge of awareness and get deferred.

Contrast Effect — the shift that follows a disaster looks excellent. The candidate who follows a weak interview looks stronger than they are. The period that follows a bad quarter looks like a recovery even when it's just regression to mean. The evaluation is never absolute. It is always relative to what came just before — and what came just before was rarely chosen deliberately.

Priming — the conversation the operator had before walking onto the floor primes how they read the floor. The financial pressure they are carrying primes them to see cost problems. The cast conflict they just resolved primes them to see interpersonal tension. The Perspective discipline is knowing what you were primed with before you ran the read — and asking whether the prime is distorting what you are seeing.

Framing Effect — the frame the operator uses to describe the problem determines what solutions are visible. "We have a traffic problem" produces marketing solutions. "We have a retention problem" produces experience solutions. "We have a cost problem" produces efficiency solutions. The same declining covers can be framed four ways — and each frame produces a different read, a different set of solutions, and a different set of blind spots.

The Perspective discipline against *Attention Distortion*: before running the read, name what you were primed with, what the most recent anchor was, what the most dramatic event this week was, and whether your frame is the right one. None of those are the read. They are the conditions the read is running through. The operator who examines the conditions before trusting the read is doing Perspective work. The operator who trusts the read without examining the conditions is reading their own filters and calling it the business.

What Changes Tomorrow

Tomorrow, before you trust a strong first impression of a number or a Guest comment, check it against the five attention distortions — anchoring, salience, contrast, priming, and framing. What grabbed your attention first is not necessarily what matters most.