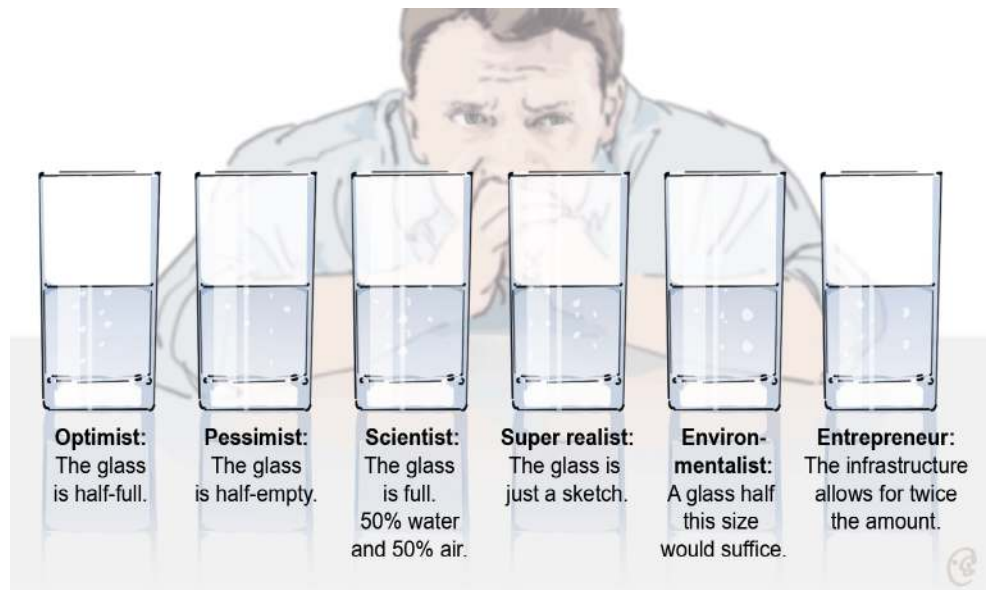


## How can my boss not see things my way?

Patrick K. Magyar



Our illustration shows how differently the same reality can be viewed. Superiors and staff members, in particular, often tend to see things differently – much to the chagrin of everyone involved and to the detriment of any team’s success.

### Frustration, farewells, failures

When I was a young coach, my brother Beat, a gifted middle distancer, joined our training team. I did not manage to help him achieve top performances. He did not get me as a coach, I did not understand him as an athlete. My first boss was the Meeting Director of the athletics meeting Weltklasse Zürich. Res Brügger also served as vice chairman of the IAAF Grand Prix and as chairman of Euromeetings, and he impacted the global athletics universe. Working with him shaped me, and I am grateful to him for it to this day. Still, after eight years, I quit my job, angry and disappointed. The two of us had fallen out over my transition from being his deputy to becoming his successor. We had even put things in writing. Alas, we had a different understanding of our agreement.

### Common goals

I experienced how not understanding each other leads to frustration, separation, or just unsatisfying performance early in my career. In time, I learned to avoid similar misunderstandings. Three realisations helped me, and my two experiences show how: My brother had other athletic needs and goals than I had for him as his coach. I was aiming at performance and success while my younger brother wanted to have fun and make new friends. Discussing – and accepting – our respective goals would have saved us quite a bit of trouble. If the goals of a team are not truly shared by its members, top performances will be hard to achieve. It is vital that everyone understands and commits to the goals of a team. Even if they slightly differ from individual ones.

### Diverging perspectives

Every perspective is the summary of individual experience, attitude, knowledge, needs, goals and of the responsibility involved. Res Brügger and I had a different take on what it meant to be “ready” for the job of a Meeting Director. I thought it meant having the technical and management skills. Res, on the other hand, thought it was about having accumulated enough experience in all tasks the job would involve. The disagreement made us go our separate ways. Eight years later, however, I returned, at the request of Res Brügger, and became Weltklasse Zürich Meeting Director.

### Realistic self-assessment

I asked myself whether I would have been ready for the job earlier more than once. As many others, I tend to overestimate myself every once in a while. A US study found that 95% of teachers considered their own pedagogic skills as above average. And another study among one million students revealed that 70% thought that their performance was above average. Mathematically speaking, the average would be 50%. To avoid drifting too far off reality, it is worth questioning your own self-assessment, no matter whether you are a superior or a member of staff, and to compare it with the assessments of colleagues.

### Understand, accept, trust

If team members are to understand each other, start with common goals, even across hierarchy levels. In a second step, address, consider, and accept as many perspectives as possible. And finally, question your own self-assessment. Understanding, acceptance, and trust will then help generate success in your team.