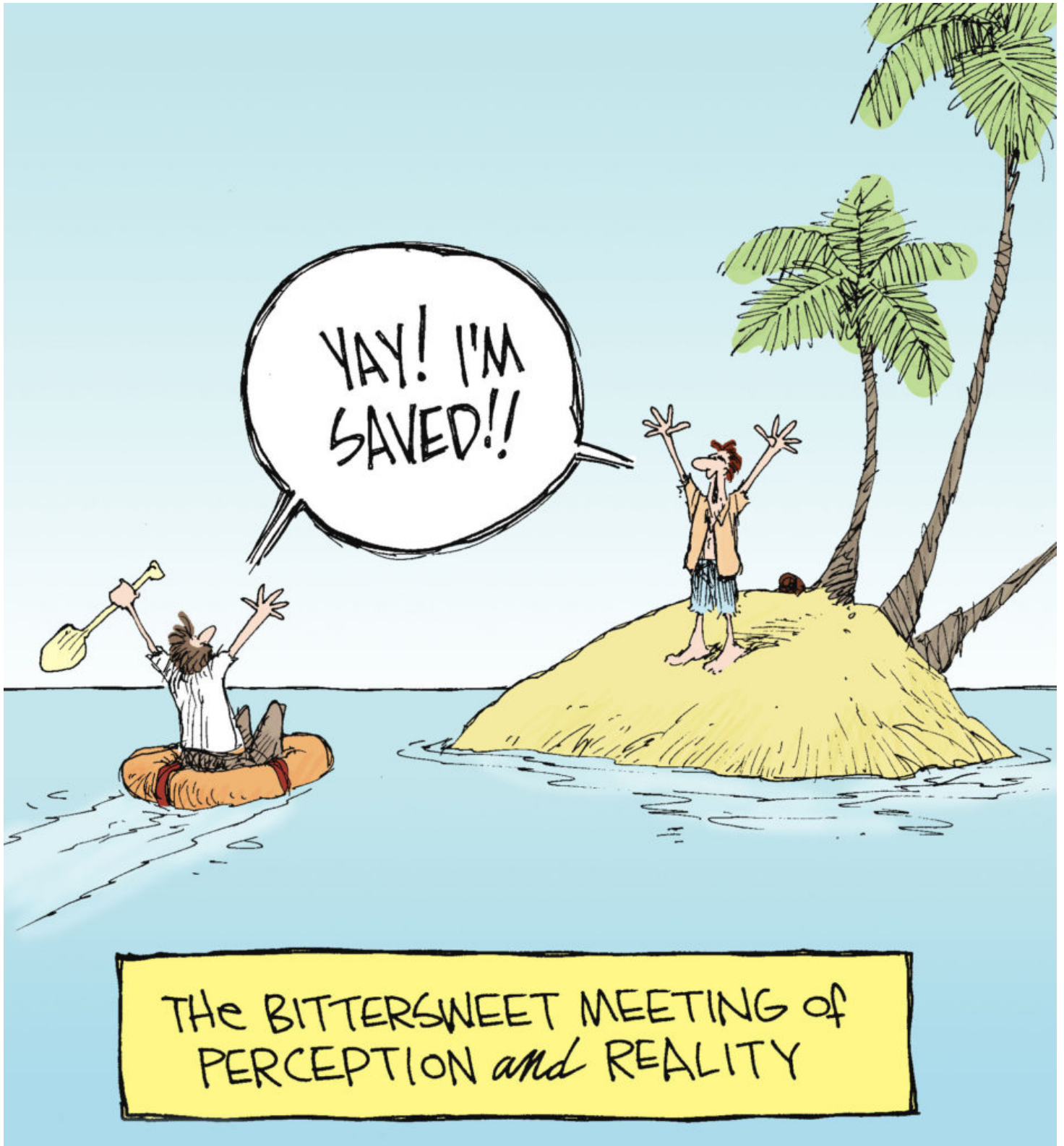


Perception vs reality



Be careful how you interpret the world, it is like that. Eric Heller

Perception is reality.

I have always resisted this thought, though I believe it is true, though it is not.

Reality is immutable so our perception of it should be immaterial. (Thinking that an apple is an orange doesn't change the molecular structure of the apple.) And yet, each of us comprehends and interprets reality through our personal, unique lenses. We often mistake our perception for reality.

Sometimes, we may see a small and accurate facet of reality but it is incomplete, which leads to correct but limited perceptions. [[The Blind Men and the Elephant](#) parable illustrates this conundrum.]

How can we negotiate this tenacious fallacy?

1. As you relate to other people, constantly remind yourself of how pervasive the perception vs reality challenge is, and try to manage it.

Anticipate how things may be perceived by others and try to present them clearly so that reality has a chance to prevail. Try to understand how people are perceiving things so that you can correct misconceptions.

2. Don't let your perceptions define your reality.

Douglas Adams reminds us that "Everything you see or hear or experience is specific to you. You create a universe by perceiving it, so everything in the universe you perceive is specific to you." Continually scrutinize your thoughts and convictions in order to verify their veracity. Pursue truth; avoid and forsake a mere perception of the truth. As Daniel Moynihan famously said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts."

3. Leaders, this topic underscores how challenging it is to communicate well.

When communicating to your stake holders, always assume that you are not as good at communicating as you think you are.

Tom Peters writes, "The biggest problem with leadership communication is the illusion that it has occurred. A 2002 survey of 1,104 business professionals showed that while 86% of their leaders feel that they are great communicators, only 17% believe their leaders are, indeed, effective communicators."

Good communication will help align perception with truth.

"Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." – Albert Einstein