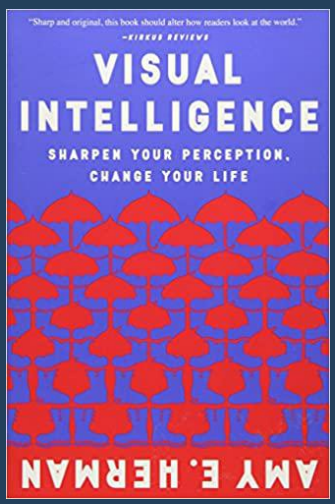

Visual Intelligence

Visual Intelligence
Year of publication: 2017
Author: Amy E. Herman
336 pages
Link for purchase: https://amzn.to/2xOP2Io

Amy E. Herman's book "Visual Intelligence" was published in 2016. This book features 336 pages that address the benefits of developing keen observation and the techniques required for innovative thinking. In a very didactic way, the author brings the lessons of the course she teaches to FBI agents and large multinational companies. This course is called "The Art of Perception."

Score

8

9 Aplicability
7 Inspiration
8 Innovation
9 Impact on results
8 Structure

Main ideas of the book

- Knowing how to see what no one sees is the main factor for success in life and business.
- Through art it is possible to shake our perceptions and develop an improved way of observing the people and the world around us;
- As with journalism, answering the questions "who", "what", "when" and "where" is the starting point for an ordinary person to become an experienced observer;
- Things are almost never as they seem to be. Therefore, to sharpen perception it is necessary to use different perspectives;
- Knowing how to communicate observations made to others is as important as analyzing them;
- We need to identify what our own perceptions and biases are. That done, we should use only those who work for us.

To whom is this book indicated?

The teachings in this book are a source of learning for entrepreneurs, HR managers, psychologists, professionals, salespeople, and others who want to develop a more accurate perception of people and situations.

Overview of the book

Overview: The art of seeing beyond the obvious

In this part, the author explains why knowing how to see is so essential to business success. It also reveals the technique used to increase your power of perception.

Why is perception so lucrative?

In the modern world, successful people are not the smartest, fastest or richest. The ones that stand out are those that have learned to see what no one sees. Just think that big business came out of the ability to see what other people still didn't see.
In addition to creating opportunities, the ability to see beyond the obvious is paramount to preventing real disasters in companies, institutions, and even personal life. This ability to see what others do not identify is called visual intelligence.

> *"Glance at a man and you find his nationality written on his face," he instructed, "his means of livelihood on his hands and the rest of his story in his gait, mannerisms, watch-chain ornaments and the lint adhering to his clothes."*

We see with the brain

The author explains that seeing is far beyond a passive activity. Contrary to popular belief, seeing is not only about the eyes. The brain is responsible for most of the work that is done during the visual process.
The structure of the retina is so complex that it cannot even be classified as a camera. The human retina is compared to an amazing computer as it is part of the brain itself. This means that we see not only with the eyes, passively, but with the brain.

How to develop this ability?

Because visual intelligence depends to a large extent on our neural connections, developing it requires continually exercising the brain. This can be done through various activities such as reading or studying something new. The important thing is to learn constantly.
In addition to these strategies, the author mentions her technique during the course of visual intelligence offered to the FBI. This technique consists of studying art. By accurately observing ancient paintings and sculptures it is possible to increase the speed of brain processing.
The author explains that in order to improve the perception capacity it is fundamental to shake our world view. According to her, art is perfect for this, as it manifests themes of human nature that accompany complex and often subjective factors.

Overview: Who, what, when and where

Here are presented the basic questions that a good observer should answer. Through them, the author teaches how to see beyond the obvious.

Who?

A good observer never draws conclusions from past appearances or situations. Quick and unconfirmed observations are harmful and, in some cases, fatal. Just because someone says it is doesn't mean it is. Therefore, to make it a fact, one has to check it.
To think about how looks can be deceiving, let's consider an example. A well-dressed man in an airport does not necessarily mean that he is a successful businessman. It is possible that he dressed like that exactly to disguise his role as a drug dealer.

In making an observation, attention is required to the smallest details. Often identifying small details can solve crimes that are difficult to investigate.

What?
While it is not possible to have a complete picture of what is going on, there are always facts. Such facts, when put together, can point to what is or is not happening. When observing the “what” element, you need to devote all the necessary time without being influenced by haste.

When?
The "when" refers to the time when the action occurred or is occurring. This element says a lot about the context of the situation as a whole, revealing precious information to the observer.

Where?
The author teaches that the “where” element is linked to the facts of the place and its surroundings. It draws attention to the fact that it makes sure that the observations are objective rather than subjective. Objective observation is one that is based on practical or mathematical facts.
A subjective observation is based on feelings, opinions or premises. For example, when someone says "the wound is ugly", we are talking about a subjective observation. When it is said that “the wound is 2cm in diameter and bleeding,” it is an objective observation.

Overview: View from all angles

This section talks about the importance of seeing using three perspectives (physical, mental, and service).

Physical perspective
Things are not always what they seem, especially at first glance. The literal or figurative position in which one finds oneself determines how one sees things. Thus, to have a broader view you need to perform an analysis from every possible angle.
To illustrate this physical perspective, just consider a concept adopted by the Toyota company: "go and see." The idea is for executives to leave the comfort of their offices to physically go where the work is being done.

Mental perspective
The author brings the concept of empathy as one of the pillars of the mental perspective. The ability to empathize is essential for stimulating creative thinking, managing conflict, and building a solid relationship with people. These are key factors for the success of a business.
The mental perspective is not fixed. This means that it can change according to factors such as mood, time, acquisition of new experiences, etc. This change of perspective also changes the observations made.

Service Perspective
By tuning in to others' perspectives, it is naturally possible to identify their needs and desires more clearly. This skill is of paramount importance in the most diverse areas, from healthcare to marketing consulting services.
We must be clear that we are all in the service of others. Seeing their needs and wants is one of the essential steps for a broader perspective. According to the author, this favors problem-solving and encourages the identification of new possibilities.

Overview: Enhancing communication

The author mentions the importance of knowing how to communicate what we see more objectively, prioritizing facts.

The importance of communication
Being an excellent observer and doing a detailed analysis of the facts is not enough. Communication skills need to be honed to make this information relevant and understandable to others. Poor communication is linked to missed opportunities and problems that could be avoided.

The objective description
One way to establish proper communication is to adopt an objective description. An example of how to do this is to convey clear requirements, instructions, and goals. This makes individuals and teams achieve better results in less time.

Believe what we see
Before communicating, we must believe what we see. Even if the conclusion is considered unthinkable or unspeakable, the facts can never be ignored. At this point the following rule must be kept in mind: say what you see, not what you think.

Art to be perfected
Communicating is like making a work of art. Like great artists, excellent communicators are concise and make every word count. One way to perfect this art is to separate the objective from the subjective. This means differentiating fact from fiction.

Overview: How to overcome our perceptions and biases

This section explains how to overcome our predetermined biases and perceptions so that we can arrive at a more assertive observation.

Own perceptions and biases
All people, according to their beliefs and experiences, have their own perceptions and biases. The problem is when these factors are not examined, which can lead to fanaticism. Understanding how such insights and internal biases affect our actions is essential.
Keep in mind that in making more accurate observations we can never rely on interpretations or perceptions. It is necessary to focus on the facts.

3 rules to circumvent our biases
The author shows three rules to circumvent biases and avoid misleading analyzes. The first is to become aware of our biases and to discard the bad ones. Basically, we need to identify which biases work for and against us. Those who act against must be eliminated.
The second rule is not to confuse bias with facts. The author teaches that one must use these biases to find the facts. Thus, a bias can be very useful when applied as a starting point for seeing beyond the obvious.
The third rule is to pass our conclusions to other people. Different looks always help discern which of our conclusions are consistent and which of them are flawed. An accurate observation can never be made in isolation.

What other authors say about it?

In the book "Mindset" by psychologist Carol S. Dweck, it discusses how our beliefs shape our behavior and growth. While mindsets produce definitive worldviews, people can change by learning new skills. Human beings can be taught to respond in different ways, how to face challenges and think differently.
In "Influence: Science and Practice," author Robert Cialdini delves into the idea of personal marketing, providing tools on how to influence people on their ideas, which in a negotiation is of utmost importance. Thus, the book is based on 6 psychological principles that influence a customer's buying decision to instruct salespeople and marketers to make a purchase.
For Daniel Goleman, author of "Emotional Intelligence," strong emotions can interfere with attention and all aspects of clear thinking. Instead of trying to eliminate their feelings, people should strive to find a smart balance between reason and emotion.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

Once you know the techniques taught to the FBI, you can now apply these practical tips:

- Do not be attached to people's appearance. Seek to look at aspects that are beyond the obvious;
- Value objective facts and prevent your observation of people and situations from being based solely on past experience;
- Make descriptions of people, situations, and places with full attention, trying to identify all the details you can;
- Do not be afraid of what you see. In many cases what seems absurd is the reality;
- Take your time to observe. Take all the necessary time until your conclusions are satisfactory;
- Share your observations and conclusions with others. Different looks always have something to add.

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