



PERCEPTION = REALITY = **CHANGING PERCEPTIONS**

We have all heard that 'perception = reality'. What we see, hear and experience, most certainly effects how we act, respond and engage with others. And just as we perceive or accept the realities that others aim at us (and us at them), we are also influenced by our own internal perceptions...how we see and imagine ourselves or our events...which may do more to impact our success, or our stress, than any other factor.

We have all watched the U.S. and global political fronts in recent months and years, with a combination of fascination and concern at just how easy it seems to be to influence and control entire groups of people; to sway them away from accepted ethics and norms; and to risk undoing what took (in some cases) centuries to build. All through the purposeful creation and presentation of false perceptions as reality.

In recent weeks, we have also seen the highly positive side of this equation, as a 25-year-old soccer coach used his influence to create a perceived reality among young students trapped for weeks in a cave in Thailand; filling with rising waters and quickly depleting an already low oxygen supply; in the dark; with virtually no food or fresh water supplies; to remain calm and believe that everything was going to be alright. Similarly, their eventual rescuers, had to alter their own perception of a very dire and unlikely procedure, to believe in their odds of success that became their reality.

When industry icon Jean McFaddin, CFEE whom we sadly lost this year, stepped into her role as the Producer of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in the 1970's, her perception of the parade was one of great respect, but also one of an event that needed a long-overdue facelift. She clearly defined a perception in her mind of what it should/could be and spent nearly 25 years working toward that. During that same timeframe the annual audiences that lined the streets of New York and tuned-in to watch on television across the nation, held their own perception of awe and wonder and magic to be looked-forward to every Thanksgiving. But for Jean, it wasn't until she stepped away from

her role as producer, that she got to perceive her event from the vantage point of others, and to realize that her own perception had indeed become a reality under her watch.

We spend much of our careers creating perceptions and, in-turn, realities for our communities, our cities, our countries and our world. We work to understand what is important to our audiences, our sponsors, our volunteers, our boards, our staffs, our entertainers, our vendors, and each of our stakeholders, so that we may work to turn their perceptions into realities. And as we succeed, the perceptions of what is possible change, and we start again to build toward even greater realities.

But along that journey, we have to remember to step back once in-a-while to view what we have accomplished from the vantage point of those we touch. To be reminded of how far we have come. To ensure that we are leveraging the perceptions that others have of us and our events to build even stronger realities and legacies that will last well-beyond ourselves.

I invite you to take that all-important step back by joining your global industry peers for the 63rd Annual IFEA Convention, Expo & Retreat this October 1-3 (with CFEE and Advanced Education courses September 28-30) in beautiful San Diego, California, USA. A step back that will allow you to perceive your successes and your events from the perspective of those who understand what you do. To gain fresh perspectives on both challenges and opportunities that make us all better at what we do. And to imagine new perspectives, together, that might allow the events of our industry to bond our world closer together.

Gene Cernan, the Commander of Apollo 17 and the last man to walk on the moon, noted in his memoirs as he looked back on the earth: "I see the world without any borders; without any fighting; without any fear. And isn't it the way we perceive things, that makes them what they will be?"

I wish you all grand perceptions and even greater realities. We look forward to seeing you in San Diego in October.