The wisdom of *perspective*

HOW OUR POINT OF VIEW OFTEN DEFINES THE CHOICES WE MAKE, AND WHY THOSE CHOICES CAN ALTER OUR DESTINY.

'Looking at life from a different perspective makes you realise that it is not the deer that is crossing the road, rather it is the road that is crossing the forest.' – Muhammad Ali.

I grew up in Paris, France. When I revisited my childhood neighbourhood, I recognised absolutely everything, except that it looked much smaller than the picture in my mind from 25 years ago.

We live in a world that is driven by opinions. With the abundance of information around us, we must understand that judgement is often clouded, distorted, impressed, and driven by perspective. Perspective could be used as an excuse. It can create a world where there is no absolute truth, an environment in which there is no black and white, just grey.

Perspective is defined as "a particular attitude towards or way of regarding something, a point of view". It can also be defined as "the art of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth and position in relation to each other". I prefer this second interpretation as it sounds more precise and analytical than a mere point of view.

Today's management gurus often use the terminology of a 360-degree view, having the ability to observe something from multiple angles prior to making a decision. Greater clarity can also come from clear thinking, analysing real issues without corrupted filters.

A while ago, a businessman was asked to make a speech at a local business event, in a town facing severe economic issues. He proceeded to take a large canvas of white paper and place a red dot in the centre of it. "What do you see?" he asked the audience. The response was unanimous: "I see a red dot." The speaker then said, "you have overlooked the most important thing, you have missed seeing the huge white canvas".

Life is a bit like that. We tend to focus on the small red dots, things like setbacks, failures, successes, rejections… and often miss out on seeing the big picture, the solution, the hope. The French had a cure for all things to do with the head, a panacea for all ills – they called it the guillotine. This is what I call perspective.

All we need to start making sound decisions is to take a little step around an issue, think outside of the famed box, and start 'seeing' as opposed to just 'looking'. Scientists and inventors have this innate skill, the power to observe and look for patterns. They analyse them over time and come to their conclusions. Isaac Newton was able, with his feet firmly planted on terra firma, to define mathematical formulas to do with gravity, interplanar distances, and speed around our solar system. If the sky was the canvas used in the first story, Newton ignored the potential dot of the moon and focussed instead on what lay behind, the real scientific story.

Truths can be glaringly obvious at times. But, like common sense, 'seeing' may not be such an easy talent after all. Our past often provides clouds of pollution that stop us from looking beyond our current predicaments with clarity or objectivity. Reality, being a cartesian truism, could not possibly remain hidden behind a thin veil of fears. But how do we remove this curtain of deception, invite the light into our choices and begin to move in tune with the universe? Albert Einstein said that there are only two ways to live your life. "One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

In our coffee world, perspective can also play a big part. Since I wrote the *Global Coffee Report* article called 'The Misery of Choice' in 2018, the whys and wherefores of the emergence of new coffee shop concepts, I have noticed a myriad of projects being launched at increasing frequency. The question is what makes those new manifestations of age-old concepts compelling? What is the product differentiator – the coffee bean, the brewing method, the machine,



When making sound decisions, Eversys' Kamal Bengougam says it's important to start 'seeing' rather than just 'looking' at the issue.

location, décor, atmosphere, people? How many permutations can we have of this never-ending pursuit of the 'ultimate café', this mythical place where everybody knows your name?

In our coffee realm, people often pigeonhole automatic machines in the less authentic box. These are the same people who use emoticons / emojis to portray their feelings. If these symbols are gleefully accepted as valid descriptions of deep human engagements, how could an automatic machine be deemed as lacking in authenticity or soul? Each new generation buries the false assumptions of the previous one and this will be no exception. At the turn of the 20th century, those who wanted faster horses ended up driving cars.

In a recent speech I gave in Kyiev, Ukraine, I utilised music to describe coffee making. In my words, coffee was the music, the machine the instrument, and the barista the maestro – the virtuoso whose role was to interpret the music through the medium of his/her instrument. I like this analogy very much as the machine becomes the tool, the object which facilitates, empowers the 'human' to become more precise, more productive.

The late Mahatma Gandhi, in his amazing wisdom, said that "we should refrain from judging a man lest we had walked a mile in his shoes". This is so true. It is only when we share the same perspective as others, that we can truly appreciate what they see, how they feel, and might understand the decisions they make. In his song Man in the Mirror, Michael Jackson was speaking to the 'man in the mirror', asking him to change his ways. Even mirrors are nothing more than a mere reflection, a factice, a reversed reflection of who we are, a perspective devoid of soul. Speaking to an image never changes anything.

Prior to making decisions and forming opinions about things and people, we must elevate our consciousness, develop the ability to not only look at but see the subtleties and nuances that permeate creation, and render it this amazingly complex yet fabulous spectrum of untold possibilities.

If you do not like what you see, just move. Shift your prejudices and alter your perspective. **GCR**