

Framing bias

When a manager looks at the world through only one mental window, s/he fails to see other views. This may lead to the use of outdated, or even wrong, frames.

Frame Blindness is setting out to solve the wrong problem (or failure to adequately solve a problem) due to creating a mental framework for the decision with little thought, which can result in overlooking or losing sight of the best options.

The frame is how you narrow and pinpoint what your decision is about. Better framing leads to better solutions. Frames make things simpler and help focus attention on the issues we determine to be most important. According to Marvin L. Minsky, "A frame is a stable, coherent cognitive structure that organizes and simplifies the complex reality that a manager operates in. Many frames reside in memory and are usually evoked or triggered automatically." The terms "frame" and "framing" have their origins in cognitive science and artificial intelligence (AI), and refer to the mental representations that allow humans to perceive, interpret, judge, choose, and act.

Frames simplify issues, but excessive simplification leads to distortion. Albert Einstein once said, "We should make things as simple as possible, but not simpler."¹ Many important things may be kept in the shadows by frames. Excessive simplification leads to the preclusion of important options. For example, a manager's domestic frame may miss out on global expansion. Improper yardsticks and reference points may also be set up due to frames.

Framing a decision inevitably sets boundaries²; it controls what is in and what is out. Moreover, not all elements that are "in" will be treated equally. Our frames tend to focus us on certain things while leaving others obscured. Frames have enormous power. The way people frame a problem greatly influences the solution they will ultimately choose. Also, the frames that people or organizations routinely use for their problems control how they react to almost everything they encounter.

The focusing effect (also known as focusing illusion) is a cognitive bias that occurs when people place too much importance on one aspect of an event, causing an error in accurately predicting the utility of a future outcome.³

Next: [Overconfidence](#)

¹ Paul J. H. Schoemaker and J. Edward Russo, contained in Wharton on making decisions, edited by Stephen J. Hoch, Howard C. Kunreuther, and Robert E. Gunther, published by John Wiley & Sons, 2001

² <http://idea-sandbox.com/blog/frame-your-problems-to-create-better-solutions/#ixzz4tuD52ply>.

³Zoltán Vass. A Psychological Interpretation of Drawings and Paintings. The SSCA Method: A Systems Analysis Approach. Alexandra Publishing. p. 83.