

Shiny Shadows and Shady Prisms  
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Shiny shadows and shady prisms can help you rise to the top of your network, here's how!

A recent article by writer Frank Sorrentino suggests that we assume that our predictions are wrong even if evidence supports our rightness, that we approach likely outcomes as unlikely ones, and that we embrace the possibility that things may not play out as we anticipate.

Sorrentino's suggestions are very much like holding a shiny object, studying it from various angles by turning it all about and by pivoting oneself as well, and doing all of this without holding any judgements. When we can suspend our perceptions of what something is and is not, we open our minds to new observations, innovations, and actions.

Of course it makes great business sense to plan for contingencies; identifying foreseeable risks and developing safety nets is an essential practice. Yet, I think what Sorrentino touched on is more than just that. I think that it is breaking from the pitfalls of linear thought and group think.

What if an extraordinary shadow sparkled and a unique prism refracted shade instead of light, what would be the implications?

After watching the two videos about selective attention in the following links, it may be shocking how obvious observations can escape us when we are intensely focused on select tasks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zaa5w8cIxXI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>

These videos show that we can be blindly focused on a task and totally miss other observations that may be blatant under different circumstances, namely during times that we are not overly engrossed or pre-occupied with watching a task play out. These examples perfectly show the need to widen our perspectives, predictions, and expectations when we are forecasting future outcomes and developing future plans.

The root issue is that our minds are constantly bombarded with such an influx of data and that our minds literally develop shortcuts or schemas that filter out much of the data that we encounter. That is how our minds are able to keep up and process information timely. This is why we may not notice that Gina got her hair cut or why we may think that something is different but cannot quite put our finger on what exactly it is. Our minds literally have templates of what our mothers or our children look like and default to those templates first. This means that our realities are more fluid than we think. Facts are facts, but we do interject some subjectivity as we defer to our prior experiences and preferences while processing inputs.

Applying the same science to professional development and business, we may close ourselves off from valuable contemplations and ideas if we fail to consider a full spectrum of possibilities beyond just those associated with basic risk management.

Actually bracing full-scale for multiple outcomes may not be plausible when resources are limited, but the exercise of exploring beyond perceived predictability is a worthwhile exercise.

What would it mean for you or your business if a shadow sparkled or a prism refracted shade instead of light? What if the impossible was possible? What if expectations missed the mark and the slim odds won out?

Here are some activities to facilitate thinking differently to increase your objectivity, preparedness, differentiation, and performance:

- When analyzing do not stop after initial thoughts, delve deeper by giving room for a second, third or fourth thought, twist and turn your scenarios and consider various what ifs.
- Change physical surroundings, go outdoors, or move furniture around.
- Spark creativity by restructuring daily sequences. Embrace feeling off by this change.
- When taking a test seek out key elements like dates, regulation codes/form numbers, entity types, items subject to exceptions or limitations, locations (foreign, state, city), etc. Shift out extraneous information, identify what information is out of place and/or is missing.
- *What is missing* is a huge thing to consider. Just analyzing information presented is limiting, reflect on missing information and how it might affect situations and outcomes.
- Consider that our approaches may be wrong, right or a combination of both. Sometimes this is the key needed to unlock our minds and see things that we did not catch before when we assumed that we were absolutely right or wrong.
- Envision what else could be. Is this the best way of going about this? Is there another way to think about this?
- Contemplate why he or she would feel differently. Is our stance too liberal or too closed-minded; is it too cynical, judgmental, or naive?
- Ask what if x happened instead of y?
- Consider if and how this action supports the larger vision.
- Ponder alternatives and substitutes. Would another choice be more or less complicated, better or worse-suited?
- When we asked for x we got offered y, we were not expecting that, what now?
- When editing a draft step away and return with a fresh eye, read it from bottom to top.
- Challenge the status quo.
- Read a joke or shocking news article to reset receptiveness between evaluating alternatives, similar to resetting olfactory memory by sniffing coffee beans between fragrances.

Adopting these practices can help you be the best-prepared and biggest game-changer in your network!

Thank you for the enlightening conversation! Visit [ColumbusBlack.com](http://ColumbusBlack.com) to view my other professional development articles.

Reference:

Sorrentino, Frank. (2017, January 31). *Managing In Tumultuous Times: Turn Business Negatives Into Positives*. Retrieved from

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/franksorrentino/2017/01/31/managing-in-tumultuous-times-turn-business-negatives-into-positives/2/#52ae0b6d4d2e> on February 22, 2017,