

# : *What is the confirmation bias?*

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We rationalize, we seek evidence that confirms our beliefs and conclusions, we deny or disregard facts that are opposed to what we believe is true. Computerized decision support cannot eliminate this bias, but the way information is presented can alter our acceptance and use of facts. Varol explains "As a result of the well-documented confirmation bias, we tend to undervalue evidence that contradicts our beliefs and overvalue evidence that confirms them. We filter out inconvenient truths and arguments on the opposing side. As a result, our opinions solidify, and it becomes increasingly harder to disrupt established patterns of thinking. We believe in alternative facts if they support our pre-existing beliefs."

To help overcome confirmation bias decision support processes and tools should 1) encourage disagreement and debate, 2) encourage and reward asking good questions, and 3) provide new and more complete information. Asking probing questions in decision situations is especially important. Tools like brainstorming, devil's advocate, and checklists should be part of computerized and manual processes. Decision support should be perceived as a neutral, unbiased assistant.

Rasmussen (2018) argues "If you adopt a strategy that is one part sticking to your guns, one part considering far-out ideas, and, one part paying attention to surprises, you're ready to adapt to whatever the world throws at you in the way of evidence." In general, try to prove yourself wrong and consider new hypotheses when examining new data, cf., Luippold, Perreault, and Wainberg, 2015. There is no guaranteed approach, process, or computerized tool for overcoming confirmation bias and rationalizing. Be aware of the bias and try to overcome the tendency.

People want to minimize any cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or discomfort that arises from contradictory beliefs, ideas, information, or values. Statements do not need to be logical for people to regard them as fact, rather the statements just need to seem correct. People rationalize and find "facts" to minimize dissonance. Confirmation bias is a serious problem and it is challenging to overcome or even to minimize. We have a tendency to believe what we want to believe. We have a tendency to only believe what confirms our beliefs.

## References

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