"*Why did they do that?*"

Understanding people

Ron Gantt, Ph.D, M.Eng, CSP

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01:04:50:00
"Pinky" the Cat

CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS:

1. I DIDN´T THINK

2. I DIDN´T SEE

3. I DIDN´T KNOW

What you look for is what you find

Problem / Solution Lens

What should have happened?

What should he have done?

What is missing?



Appreciative Lens

What did he think was happening?

What was he trying to achieve?

What was his mindset at the time?

(Lundberg et. al., 2009)

REMEMBER

It’s hard to solve problems

if you don’t understand them.


You can’t control the *human factor*

Two counterpoints

01

There are patterns in how people act in situations

02

You can’t understand those patterns from afar

5 principles of human performance*

01 People’s performance is shaped by their capabilities and limitations

02 People interpret situations differently and perform in ways that make sense to them

03 People adapt to meet the demands of a complex and dynamic work environment

04 People assess risks and make tradeoffs

05 People’s performance is influenced by working with other people, technology, and the environment

*just not the ones you may have heard of

(ICAO, 2026)

The local rationality principle

People do things that make sense to them at the time

Based on

Their goals

What the individual was actively trying to achieve, balance, or prioritize during the task.

Their focus of attention

Where their attention was directed and which cues or signals captured their focus.

Their assessment of the situation

How they evaluated conditions based on their experience, training, and available information.

(Woods et. al., 2011)

How did his behavior make sense?

LOCAL RATIONALITY

What were his goals?

What did he believe was happening?

What was his focus?



01 How did the situation coincide with his capabilities and limitations?

02 How did he interpret what was happening?

03 What made the task he was doing particularly tricky and uncertain?

04 What were the different risks and how could they create tradeoffs?

05 What was going on around him and how could that have influenced him?

Here’s some things we’re doing

01

Accident / failure investigation

- Identifying how our system worked as part of the investigation
- Leveraging local rationality as our ‘stop rule’

02

Engagement & design

- Leader stop & chats focused on identifying contextual factors
- Design experiences that make sense to people

KEY TAKEAWAY

Understanding people means understanding what they are responding to and what made sense to them at the time.

External Signals & Context

The cues, information, pressures, and environmental factors actively presented to them in the moment.

Local Rationality & Focus

Their active goals, mindset, and personal evaluation that made their actions logical from their perspective.

(Woods et al., 2011)

CONNECT

Keep in touch →

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