

Leadership lessons from Twelve Angry Men – lesson 6



The Ladder of Inference is a model created by Chris Argyris and the old man's apartment scene is a very good example of the model in use.

Everyone, except of course juror n°8, has accepted that the old man in the appartement below was able to get out of bed, walk to the door of his appartement and see the young boy within 15 seconds.

Eleven jurors have “concluded” that it is possible. After some discussion, juror n°8 asks to see a plan of the apartment and slowly digs down through, assumptions, beliefs and interpretations to finally “reenact” the event complete with a mock bed, a limp, a door to be opened and someone with a stopwatch – 45 seconds!

The reality, not assumptions, beliefs or interpretations, is that it would probably have taken the old man around 40 seconds to get out of bed, walk to the door of his appartement and see the young boy – not 15 seconds.

We all have own our ladder and, even if it starts at the same point as everyone else's, because of different experiences we will not all end up at the same end point

Sometimes we need to persuade everyone to take the journey “up

the ladder", together.