

# The Illusion of Transparency

There are always two conversations in a negotiation: the one which the participants have with one another (i.e. what they say) and the one which they have with themselves (i.e. what they think, but do not say).

Experiments have shown that negotiators:

- \* underestimate their ability to conceal private information (i.e. they overestimate the ability of the other side to detect what they hide),
- \* overestimate the ability of the other side to realize and understand what they overtly communicate (i.e. they tend to think that what they said was clear, although it wasn't).

Experiments have also shown that this double illusion of transparency has two causes:

- \* the mere fact that we know what we think leads us to believe that we are transparent;
- \* when we look back at what we did and said during a negotiation, we wrongly assume that the people on the other side heard and saw everything.

Consequences:

- \* Because of the first illusion, negotiators tend to hide even more than they really want to hide.
- \* The second illusion is a major source of misunderstandings.

Source: L. van Boven, Th. Gilovich and V. Husted Medvec, *The Illusion of Transparency in Negotiations*, Negotiation Journal, Vol. 19, Number 2, April 2003