

Cognitive Bias #1 — Anchoring

Nobody asked but ...

Anchoring is a cognitive bias that we encounter in every negotiation, even with the snooze bar on our morning alarm clock. A common example would be the case where an employee asks her boss for a raise. The negotiation will then take place in the range between the current compensation and the ask or the offer, whichever comes first. Politicians take advantage of this cognitive bias among their constituents. They will pin a campaign promise, no matter how vague, to a limiting concrete — I will build a wall (all answers to who, what, when, why, and how are blurry) on the border with Mexico (specific answer to where). This incites those who want a wall at any cost. This anchors the debate on the Mexican border, not on the why of the wall. The argument never gets to whether we should have a wall. The minority who made the wall their prime reason for voting for the successful candidate no longer have to justify the wall.

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