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# Blind Spots -- (If You Don't Check Your Mirrors, You're Going to Crash!)

**You know what blind spots are. For a driver, a blind spot is an area not easily seen.** It may be the area the mirrors miss, either beside or behind the driver ... or is simply forgotten by the driver. Accidents occur when the driver changes lanes and there is another car in that blind spot. In some cases, the other car is hit or forced to take evasive action that could possibly cause a bigger accident.

As humans (and executives!), we have blind spots in our lives and businesses as well, and these blind spots cause all sorts of trouble. A senior manager brought us in to work with her team.

Her vision was a high-performing team that was efficient and happy. What she had was a group of people fighting, missed deadlines, and high employee turnover. And each saw himself or herself as a "victim" of somebody else's misbehavior. As a first step, we gave her team leadership assessments, which showed their strengths, weaknesses, and communication styles, then helped her team see their blind spots.

One person in particular, "Jim", caused a great deal of dissension because he had his own way of doing things and was unable to see (or accept) there were also other ways to accomplish the task. By forcing his style on others, instead of working together, the team members became sullen and frustrated. After we did some exercises to clarify the team blind spots and prove the power of hearing and validating everyone's ideas, her team started working together.



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Let's take this idea away from the workplace. In an orchestra, one person playing slightly out of tempo can destroy the beauty of the music. When everyone plays at the same tempo and plays the proper notes, beautiful music is created. A blind spot in this case is when the off-tempo person believes they are right and refuses to follow the conductor. Sometimes the answer is to work directly with the individual; if they can't, or won't, get on tempo they have to be removed.

So how do you know where your blind spots are? Blind spots aren't necessarily bad—they simply exist. Once you find your blind spot, you can put a "mirror" (process) in place to make sure it doesn't get you into, or cause you further, trouble. The following is a list of typical blind spots. You'll probably want to add others from your own experience. ***As you think about each item, ask yourself, "How does this cause me grief?" and "How does this get in my way or slow me down?"***.

- Not listening to another person's complete statement and jumping to conclusions about what they were going to say.
- Looking at a situation and immediately judging it as "right" or "wrong" before getting all the facts (Judgments create a blind spot - automatically!)
- Impatience with people who like to talk or talk too much
- Frustration with people who are less conscientious, systematic, conservative, and task-oriented than you
- Tolerations ..., these are the little things that cause momentary irritation you are meaning to "fix". For example, a broken chair, messy desk, chronically losing keys, etc.
- Rushing those who have a more patient approach
- Looking at your own needs and not asking others about theirs
- Quickly labeling situations or people
- Putting up walls against feedback (especially "negative" feedback)



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**Understanding yourself and the way you think and react under pressure is crucial to getting an accurate idea of your blind spots. Start by asking these questions:**

- What is my behavior style and how do I handle problems, people, pace, and procedures?
- How does my behavior style work or not work with my teams' styles?
- What are my values and how am I motivated?
- What comments and feedback do I hear from others?
- What do I do with it?
- What feedback am I ignoring?

Working on your personal blind spots and those of your team, can help you to create a harmonious workplace and avoid those “crashes!”

