



How to avoid 10 of the most common Leadership Blind Spots

Blind Spots.

In cars, we have blind spots where we can't see what is going on right around us. The larger those blind spots are, the more dangerous we are.

We can have blind spots in our life as well – things and behaviours that we do that we don't understand or appreciate the impact that they have on others and in ourselves. In her book, *Fearless Leadership*, Loretta Malandro, PhD., identifies 10 behavioural blind spots that can derail leaders.

These 10 blind spots are:

1. Going it alone
2. Being insensitive of your behaviour on others
3. Having an "I know" attitude
4. Avoiding the difficult conversations
5. Blaming others or circumstances
6. Treating commitments casually
7. Conspiring against others
8. Withholding emotional commitment
9. Not taking a stand
10. Tolerating "good enough"

We each have these blind spots, with some being larger for us than others. Just like in a car, knowing your blind spots is important as you can make some extra effort to ensure that we see what we are doing. And just like in cars, if you don't know your blind spots, you can get into big trouble.

The first step in avoiding these blind spots is to understand them and what they look like. It is easy to identify these in people we work with, but it is difficult to identify them ourselves (thus they are called blind spots). Here are some behaviours that describe each blind spot:

Going it alone: when we do things without asking others for their input. Examples of this behaviour include: not asking for help, not accepting help, not talking about the stress you are under, not including others in decisions, feeling like you need to get things done on your own.

Being insensitive of your behaviour on others: when we tend to judge others not by their intentions, but by their actions. Examples include: not noticing how body language impacts others, choosing words that can be mean or misunderstood and provoke negative response, not realising how your devaluing others input or ideas, and rationalizing that people are hurt by statements such as "they'll get over it."

Having an "I know attitude": when we think that we are always right and those who disagree with us are wrong. Examples include: not listening to others, always coming up with reasons others ideas won't work, devaluing others ideas, arguing with anyone who disagrees with you, refusing to explore other options, making assumptions on others intent or their ideas.

Avoiding difficult conversations: we try to avoid conflict and stressful situations – so we avoid those conversations where that can happen. Examples include: not raising concerns or issues about others behaviour, avoiding talking about negative information (bad sales, company layoffs, etc.), softening tough messages and not talking about real concerns, only talk about surface issues.

Blaming others or circumstances: when we avoid the need to take accountability or try to negate by shifting blame. Examples include: always having a reason, excuse or explanation for why something went wrong, “yeah, but...”, complaining about how it could have gone “if only”, leaving a project when you see it is not going to succeed.

Treating commitments casually: when we make casual commitments that we don’t keep. Examples include: showing up late for meetings, not getting projects done on time, not making hard commitments in the first place, always having an escape hatch, using the “I’ll try” instead of “I will”

Conspiring against others: when we engage in rumour mills and gossip or talk negatively behind peoples backs. Examples include: talking about how you think a project won’t succeed with others one-on-one but not in the project meeting, discrediting others ideas or accomplishments, displaying negative non-verbal cues such as rolling eyes, engaging in conspiracy theories.

Withholding emotional commitments: we can agree intellectually, but still withhold putting our heart and soul into a project. Examples of this behaviour include: just complying with a decision, resisting change, withholding support, going through the motions.

Not taking a stand: sometimes when we know we should do something but we don’t because of how it could impact us. Examples include: not speaking up in a meeting when you disagree with the majority, not speaking up when senior executives are around, getting people to work around a problem instead of addressing it.

Tolerating “good enough”: when we settle for getting things done ok, but don’t push us or our teams for excellence. Examples include: not holding others accountable for their work, accepting incremental improvements, not willing to explore radical options, staying inside one’s comfort zone, not looking at what the future will require.

Understanding is the first step. Identifying our own blind spots is the harder part. This is where it requires that we ask a few trusted confidants to work closely with us and point out where they see our blind spots.

This is a hard exercise but one that is very beneficial. We don’t like to hear about our faults. Others don’t like to point them out. But if we are open to growing and learning, then by identifying our own weaknesses, we can start the process of improvement and become better leaders.