

Check Your Ministry Blind Spots: 7 Ways Your Mind Blocks Out Reality

Many of us act as though we all see the same reality, yet the truth is we don't. Human Beings have cognitive biases or blind spots.

Blind spots are ways that our mind becomes blocked from seeing reality as it is - blinding us from seeing the real truth about ourselves in relation to others. Once we form a conclusion, we become blind to alternatives, even if they are right in front of their eyes.

Emily Pronin, a social psychologist, along with colleagues Daniel Lin and Lee Ross, at Princeton University's Department of Psychology, created the term "blind spots." The bias blind spot is named after the visual blind spot.

Passing the Ball

There is a classic experiment that demonstrates one level of blind spots that can be attributed to awareness and focused-attention. When people are instructed to count how many passes the people in white shirts make on the basketball court, they often get the number of passes correct, but fail to see the person in the black gorilla suit walking right in front of their eyes. Hard to believe but true!

Blind Spots & Denial

However, the story of blind spots gets more interesting when we factor in our cognitive biases that come from our social needs to look good in the eyes of others.

When people operate with blind spots, coupled with a strong ego, they often refuse to adjust their course even in the face of opposition from trusted advisors, or incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.

Two well-known examples of blind spots are Henry Ford and A&P:

? Ford's success with the Model-T blinded him to the desires of his customers. That gave the fledging General Motors an opportunity to capture a winning share of the automobile market with a broader range of models and options.

? A&P stuck with the grocery chain's private label products even as their customers defected en masse to supermarkets that carried the national brands they saw advertised on TV.

Recovery

The good news is that companies can recover from denial; even when they seem permanently wedded to their histories, their philosophies, or their belief systems. IBM, which had been caught up in its own "bureau-pathology," learned to conquer arrogance and overcome its history and culture, under the leadership of Louis Gerstner.

Intel, DuPont, and Coca-Cola, are more examples of corporations caught in denial traps when launching new products. They demonstrated that when corporate management has strong convictions, or worse yet, hubris about their points of view, they can become blind to their customer's needs - needs that are right in front of their very eyes.

Seeing the real truth is an art and a science. When we get the balance right between what we think is true and what is really true - we are managing our blind spots with integrity, and wisdom.

Fortunately, these well-known brands did not live in denial very long. It was only a passing phase, and they recovered from it by revisiting reality with an open mind. Blind spots explain why the "smartest people in the room" (as Enron's top executives were famously called) can sometimes be very dumb. They do not see the light - they are not open to changing their minds.

The Power of Coaching to Dissolve Blind Spots

Denial and Blind spots are one of the primary reasons why Executive Coaching is so vital for leaders, and why peer coaching is equally important for employees to practice. Coaching can effectively uncover and deal with blind spots and denial and give the decision-makers a fresh perspective on how to handle executive challenges.

Coaching can also help individuals gain a broader and more 'realistic perspective' about situations and themselves. Executive, Team and Organizational Coaching can help leaders calibrate with the world around them, giving them reality checkpoints that position them to navigate the real world with wisdom and insight.

From time to time, we all need a wake-up call to be sure that we do not allow ourselves to confuse our denial maps with the actual territory.

Check Yourself

Here are 7 Common Blind spots:

1. **Denial of Reality** - Feeling so strong about our own beliefs that we deny the beliefs of others, or deny facts right in front of our eyes.
2. **Control** - Seeing ourselves as being more responsible for things than we actually are, or having more control over things and events than we truly do.
3. **Made-Up Memories** - Making decisions based on memories that did not happen. Often we confuse our imaginations, or our dreams, with reality.
4. **Reality Distortions** - Distorting reality to conform to preconceptions.
5. **Know it All** - Thinking that we know more than what we really do. (We simply don't know what we don't know.)
6. **Listening Only to Validate What We Know** - Failure to listen to others.
7. **Undervaluing What We Do Know** - Listening too much to others, and allowing others' beliefs to talk us out of our beliefs; or in some cases cause us not to trust our instincts.

Neuro-tips: Removing Blind Spots

Tip #1 - *It Takes Thought to Learn.* The brain does not always allow us to hear all the facts if they do not fit our prior understanding of a concept. To learn new facts, you must be actively open to accepting opposition.

Tip #2 - *Effectively Working Together.* Partners who were considered controlling were perceived as critical and rude, and their advice was generally rejected and not trusted. When the same partners showed appreciation, a feeling of rapport and trust developed, creating a deep 'WE-centric' bond.

Read more from Judith [here](#).