

How to Check For Blind Spots

One of my mentors, Brad Waggoner, has regularly quipped, “Most people struggle with self-awareness, so why would I think I am somehow different from everyone else?” He is right. Everyone struggles with self-awareness to a degree, and we are foolish if we think we are immune. Our lack of self-awareness in life and leadership is often referred to as our blind spots. I have been leading other leaders for a long time, watching them interact with their teams and with the team they serve on, and I’ve seen three common blind spots in leaders:

1. Many leaders talk longer than they realize.

Many leaders talk longer than they think they do. They can easily dominate meetings because of their convictions, their ideas, and the sheer amount of work to report. But by over-talking in meetings, leaders can unintentionally stifle the team. One practical way to combat the temptation to talk too much is to set a time for yourself and hold yourself accountable not to cross it.

2. Many leaders sound harsher than they mean.

Because leaders can underestimate the power of their position, they can sound harsher than they realize. Every word from the mouth of a leader is received with amplified impact, so leaders who bring sharp critiques to their teams must do so very carefully. If the leader thinks the rebuke is a “5,” the people likely hear it as an “8.” Wise leaders steward their words very carefully.

3. Many leaders change direction more than they know.

Leaders are often about new ideas, change, and vision. Because of that, leaders can err by constantly bringing new direction to the team. The team can sometimes feel as if they have yet to execute properly the last batch of ideas or see the fruit of the last direction before a leader brings a new direction. Effective leaders know that consistent direction over time is far better than constantly shifting the direction of the team.

Of course, there are other common blind spots, but these three can easily hamper a leader’s effectiveness. Blind spots can’t be corrected if the leader doesn’t know they exist. For blind spots to be corrected in a leader’s life, the leader must be in community and humbly listen to others whom the leader trusts.

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