



Leadership Tips **October-November** **2018:** **Illuminating** **Blind Spots** **to Improve Your** **Effectiveness**

Contact:
The Consulting Team
650-965-3663
Marilyn@TheConsultingTeam.com



Dr. Marilyn Manning
Founder & CEO



Kathy
Citron



Craig
Harrison



The Consulting Team, LLC
www.TheConsultingTeam.com



Stewart
Levine



Leslie
Loomis



Victoria
Smith-Raymond

Illuminating Blind Spots **to Improve Your Effectiveness**



Do you sometimes feel misunderstood at work?

Are you perplexed that co-workers don't see you as you see yourself?

Would you like to learn what you don't know about yourself?

Are you self-aware?

To be an effective professional today requires a multitude of skills. In addition to communication and leadership skills, you've got to be able to collaborate with colleagues, give and receive feedback effectively, work with diverse personalities and styles, be diplomatic and sharpen your emotional intelligence.

To be most effective, it's also imperative you discover and address your blind spots. You might be thinking "Really? I have a blind spot?" It's OK, we all do.

Are you Ready to Look at Yourself Through the Eyes of Others?

There are things about you as a leader and employee that you cannot see, hear or independently know about yourself. The good news: once you learn what's in your blind spot and incorporate this information into your own development, the better able you will be to connect and inspire others and garner the trust and confidence of your colleagues.

How do you deal with your blind spots? One way occurs when others reflect back to you what they see, so you gain insight into how you're perceived. And many times it's not as you intended to be seen or heard. Therein lies the disparity.

Feedback Illuminates Your Blind Spots

To compensate for our natural blind spots, we rely on tools like mirrors on our automobiles to see cars on our flanks. In the workplace, 360-degree reviews and other assessment tools reveal both strengths and shortcomings. Sometimes we don't know what we don't know, but often our manager, mentor, coach or trusted co-worker knows, and they can help illuminate our blind spots.

Others can help you see what you cannot otherwise see, and help you know how you come across to other people. Through their feedback you can improve and grow as a professional. Would you like to look at yourself through the eyes of others?

The Other Side of Fear is Success

It takes courage and a willingness to be receptive, which can give you an opportunity for improvement. It can be shocking, however, to receive input inconsistent with your self-image and beliefs about who you are, what you stand for, or how you project yourself in the public sphere. Yet the more you know about how others see you, the better you'll be able to see your impact on others.

Opening the Doors of Perception

One leader sees herself as bold, but her employees perceive her as arrogant. An employee sees himself as pragmatic -the ultimate improviser, while others regard him as unprepared. Others' perceptions don't often match our own sense of how we are perceived. Worse yet, we don't even realize the disparity.

Why don't people see us the way we see ourselves? Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen address this question in their 2014 book *Thanks for the Feedback*.

Universal Blind Spots: Our Leaky Face and Leaky Tone

"Some blind spots are common to all people. Our face, when giving a presentation, is a literal blind spot. We tend not to be aware of the unintended signals our facial expressions may be conveying."

Our eyes literally can't see ourselves when we are speaking. Our audience not only sees but also interprets our facial expressions (whether correctly or incorrectly), which may belie our words. For example, a speaker's furrowed brow or look of disdain will contradict a verbal message which is intended to convey concern, care or love.

It is also difficult to hear our voice as others hear it. If you have recorded your voice, you know how different it sounds from what you hear. It's often a big surprise when someone tells us we sound sarcastic, tired or disinterested, distrustful or dismissive. It's a blind spot we all have.

When Perception Doesn't Match Intention

Most of us have good intentions, but often are perceived differently than our we think. We have blind spots in understanding our impact on others. Through developing skills and by assessing our emotional intelligence, we can greatly increase our self-awareness. This is a key skill in developing positive relationships, in working well in teams, and in managing others effectively.

It's essential to understand our own emotions, how they impact others, and to also read other people's body language and emotions. It gives us more empathy, helps diffuse conflicts, and builds trust. Some people are naturally more empathetic, and some less so. How aware are you of how you "come across" to others?

Minding the Gap

Sometimes feedback from others coming from this gap between a leader's intention and followers' perceptions can range from mild surprise to disbelief. Seemingly innocuous feedback from a manager or coach that illuminates your blind spot may nevertheless land harshly. To the receiver, feedback that illuminates a blind spot can sometimes be devastating. It impacts a person's sense of who he or she is, and wants to be, in the workplace. Both parties should be aware of the potential power of feedback tied to a person's blind spot. It's all in how it's received. Many factors may be at play, including one's upbringing, past traumas, sensitivities, or psychological make-up.

If the parties know and trust each other, the degree of feedback and candor can be calibrated to what the recipient of feedback is able to handle. Yet the giver of feedback often doesn't know the recipient well, and therefore well-intended suggestions or critiques can hit a vulnerable recipient hard and deep unless tactfully and sometimes delicately communicated, despite the feedback giver's best intentions.

Factors Affecting Feedback

Receiving permission to provide feedback or coach a colleague or direct report is the first step. Unsolicited feedback may be unwanted, untimely and thus unwise to bestow. Good timing is also essential. Often the person who hasn't processed their own performance or behavior may be ripe for bruising.

The Value of Skilled Coaching

A common mistake in giving feedback is that the praise is general while the criticism is specific. Make sure to give balanced feedback. Make your positive feedback as specific as your negative feedback.

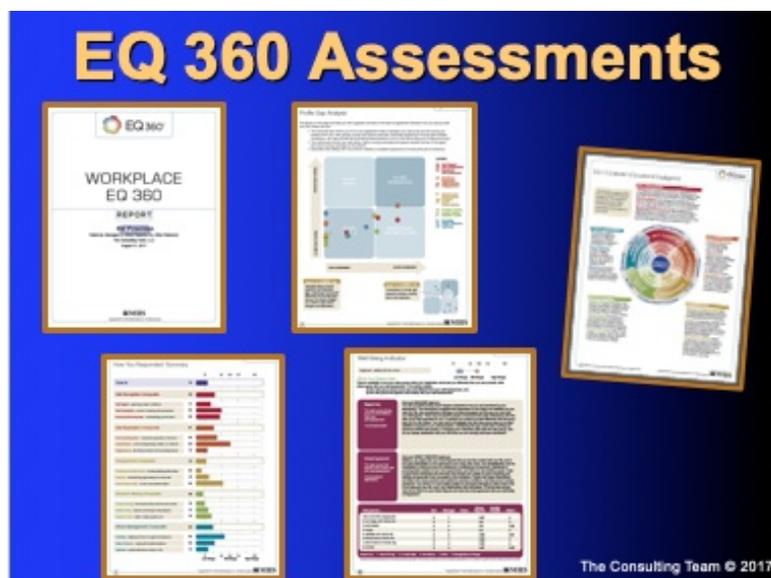
Set Your Sites on Insights

"Our perception could either be our path to nirvana or an invisible cage that bottles us up," states author and technology leader Pawan Mishra.

When you seek to discover your blind spots you create opportunities for growth and self-improvement. Are you ready to open your blinds?

Assessments Aren't Just for Property

A logical next step for your professional growth is to take an appropriate assessment to identify your strengths and your areas for growth. Assessments range from leadership and emotional intelligence assessments like the EQ 360 to personality and communication style assessments like the DiSC or Myers Briggs. Each provides you a baseline of information about yourself from which you can chart your course.



An EQ 360 Report

Executive Coaching: From Problematic to Positive

The executive was bottom-line, results-oriented, pushy to the point that complaints went to Human Resources that she was very directive and intimidating, and not collaborative.

After meeting her and setting goals to modify her communication style, we administered the EQ 360 (emotional intelligence) and conducted interviews with a few direct reports and her boss. After several coaching sessions where we discussed various new approaches and role played, HR started to hear positive feedback.

It took a few months for staff to fully trust her new approach, but the team now feels positive and supported.

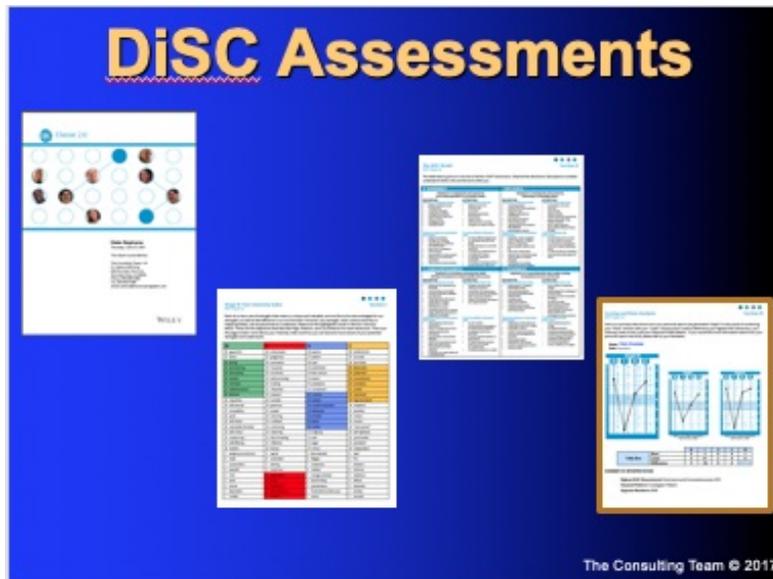
* * * * *

From Clash of Types to Finding Middle Ground: The Department Head and a Direct Report Manager

HR called us in because the manager complained that her boss, the department head, was a bottleneck, always late on responding to her requests, and also micromanaged her by redlining all of her documents.

We had both take the DiSC style assessment and discovered that the head was a reserved perfectionist and the manager was an influencing, big picture type. We coached each individually on how to flex their styles to accommodate each other's needs. Together, we had them make some agreements on how to better work together.

After a few months, when we checked back with them, they had learned to be more supportive and respectful of their differences.



Sample DiSC Report

Creating a Road Map to Growth with Coaching and Assessments

How well do you know your strengths? How aware are you of your shortcomings? What's in your blind spot? Whether you are a new or seasoned manager, new to an organization, just entering a new role, it's important to take stock of where you are and where you want to go.

-

- Are you interested in learning how your direct reports, manager and peers see you?
- Or are you seeking ways to resolve conflict with a co-worker?
- You might want to hone your skills as you apply for a promotion or new position.

Whatever your professional goal, you may want to start with an assessment before charting your plan for skill development. This could be an opportunity for you to illuminate your blind spots and shine.



Related Assessment and Coaching resources of The Consulting Team to help you overcome your blind spots:

Assessment Tools

DiSC® Classic Communication Style Assessments

Emotional Intelligence Executive Coaching and Assessment

Do you have a leader or employee in need of **coaching** to improve their leadership, communication skills (including listening skills), emotional intelligence or customer service orientation? **Let us help.**



Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about training, coaching, consulting assistance and also one-to-one training for leaders and employees.

Call us at 650-965-3663
or email us at
M@TheConsultingTeam.com
for more information.
www.TheConsultingTeam.com

The Consulting Team

— FACILITATING POSITIVE CHANGE —

Copyright © The Consulting Team, LLC 2018. All Rights Reserved.