

Blind Spots Holding You Back from Success:

#2 Conflict

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BLINDSPOT NAVIGATOR



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Blind Spots Conflict

What is Conflict?

According to Meriam Webster Conflict is defined as, to be different, opposed, or contradictory : to fail to be in agreement or accord.

Conflict occurs when we think we are always right and those who disagree with us are wrong. Examples include, not listening to others, always coming up with reasons the ideas of others won't work, devaluing other's ideas, arguing with anyone who disagrees with you, refusing to explore other options, making assumptions on others intent or their ideas.

Conflict is simply the energy created by the gap between what we want and what we're experiencing," says Nate Regier, a former practicing psychologist and author of *Conflict Without Casualties* (Berrett-Koehler, 2017). "If we define conflict as energy that's created by the gap, then the real question is 'How are we going to use that energy?'"



My Story

Growing up, I constantly felt I had to prove myself as an immigrant to Canada, which is why I developed conflict as one of my blind spots. Being an immigrant, I barely spoke English and had difficulty learning to write. I was bullied, taunted, and felt the constant need to prove myself to others. This blind spot carried with me into my business and how I interacted with my employees. I became a perfectionist in everything I did and nothing less was acceptable. This attitude created conflict with my employees because I only had one point of view - mine. I didn't allow room for engagement nor did I create a space for employees to feel safe in contributing their point of view or ideas.

I worked extra hard to make sure my personal success was measured by how well I did in my business. However, I also lost sight that personal success also means how many lives you can empower and motivate people to rise up to be their best, which means sometimes you have to listen to others. I had to make room for healthy conflict so any existing roadblocks between myself and my employees were removed.



There only exists room for commitment to getting the job done and moving forward as an entire team. The success of any company is not built by just one person but an entire team of people willing to overcome conflict and commit to getting the results needed.

I recall we had a migration project for a client, In the IT industry, a migration project to a cloud server was not an easy task back then. A lot of preparation, documenting, following the process and collaboration needs to occur. It's not a one-man effort and usually require more than one person on the project. Since I wanted to prove I could do the project with a quick turn-around time, I made sure my employees understood that as well. I received some objectives by my technical team on this unrealistic expectation, but I was adamant in show casing our abilities to this new client and I refused to hear their frustrations and stress. As you can imagine, communication lines broke down, conflict started to arise as a result, and the project became a nightmare.

When I look back, I can see how I created the conflict. I didn't trust my team and didn't provide the opportunity to listen to them. In turn they felt unsafe and as the project commenced, they withheld communication from me when they were facing challenges because they felt I was unapproachable. Funny thing about conflict – if you don't have trust all around, people can't engage in healthy conflict dialogue and this issue rears its ugly head when issues start to arise or when goals/projects can't be completed.



After this disaster, I realized the issue was my conflict blind spot. When I had to own up to my employees that my leadership behavior caused the conflict and their inability to perform their work effectively, was when I started to change. Part of developing leadership modelling behaviors is in recognizing the impact of actions and behaviors on others and the business. There is no shame. It takes a lot of courage and vulnerability in leadership to model the right behaviors and move an organization forward towards high performing results.



Behaviours

Your blind spots affect every aspect of your life, how you show up in relationships, and how you react to others. Every single one of your actions causes either a positive or negative impact on others, who then react either positively or negatively towards you. This cycle can cause an issue to escalate out of control or an emotionally charged situation to explode. In a professional environment these reactions can impact a person's future opportunities for advancement and the team's effectiveness to succeed. As a leader, you will need the tools to understand the situation and how to defuse any negative emotional build up.

What does a conflict in an organization look like?



Conflict Blind Spot Behaviour

We behave in certain ways when we don't trust the people we interact with, which affects our ability to succeed. Leaders who don't trust their teams will create toxic environments by breeding conflict in others inside and outside of the team. Here are some of the behaviours conflict creates in people.

In Sales:

We've all met the type of salesperson who thrives in conflict. They walk into your office and quickly take control. Before you know it they have jumped into their presentation telling you what you need and why he's the guy to get it for you. You barely get a word in edgewise as he spouts off all the great reasons you need to buy from him. When you ask how much, he doesn't answer but keeps telling you how wonderful he and the company he works for are. Then when he hits you with the price he's ready to do battle and loves negotiating a good deal for himself. You try to tell him, no, but he won't hear of it and begins to manipulate you into signing on the dotted line.



I QUIT!

In Management:

A manager with a conflict blind spot will do one of two things, avoid it at all costs or be constantly demanding more from his team. A manager who avoids conflict will try to keep everyone happy, but won't succeed and the team will feel unheard and on their own to solve their issues with the work, the client, or each other. The manager who uses conflict to bully his team into seeing things his way will not listen to the team or provide them with a safeplace to discuss their limitations and weaknesses. It's his way or the highway.

In Service:

Customer Service Reps live with conflict everyday as people come to them with problems, complaints, and issues. They have to be masters at diffusing conflict situations and communication. Too often an organization does not give its Service department the tools to fix conflicts and when this happens, customers will go elsewhere. On the other side of conflict, customer service policies which avoid conflict will give away too much to a customer to make sure they are happy and this affects the businesses bottom line as customers start to take advantage.

Anytime you demonstrate a willingness to listen with a minimum of defensiveness, criticism, or impatience, you are giving the gift of understanding and earning the right to have it reciprocated.

Blind Spot Checklist 1

- Avoid conflict
- Communication one direction
- Don't value the contributions of team members
- Blame others, circumstances, and processes for failures
- Control of information, tasks, and won't share with others
- Fail to keep your promises, agreements and commitments
- Micromanage and resist delegating.
- Inconsistency between what you say and how you behave
- Scapegoating others
- Judge blame and criticize rather than offer feedback
- Do not allow others to contribute or make decisions
- Refuse to compromise to foster win-lose arguments
- Refuse to be held accountable by your colleagues.
- Don't discuss your personal life
- Aren't vulnerable
- Don't ask colleagues for help
- Take suggestions and critiques as personal attacks
- Refuse to follow through on decisions
- Secret back-door negotiations to create alliances
- Refuse to apologize

Blind Spot Checklist 2

- Are Transparent with intentions
- Say what they mean and mean what they say
- Asks for team member input & feedback
- Understands failures are part of the process not a fault
- Is a resource of information for others to go to
- Can count on them to get the job done
- Enables teammates to do their job
- What you see is what you get
- Takes responsibility for actions
- Gives constructive feedback
- Supports teammates
- Negotiates to ensure win-win
- Mediates conflict
- Shares appropriate personal stories
- Are vulnerable
- Asks for help
- Focused on solutions not problems
- Apologizes for mistakes
- Acts for the good of the team
- People trust them

Which List has the Most Checks?

If there are more checks on the first list than the second, you might have issues with blind spots on your team.

Ask yourself.

What is one thing that your team can do differently to improve its performance?

How does your team use conflict?

Is your team performing to their potential?

Does your team contribute ideas?

Do you often find yourself needing to be in control?

Are fear, doubt and anxiety a large part of your team?

Do you feel your team doesn't tell you necessary information?

Why is conflict easy or difficult for you?

How do you want your team to perform?



Conflict

Conflict is a normal and natural occurrence of interacting with one another. The cost of resolving conflict is negligible relative to the cost of leaving conflicts unresolved. Difficult behavior can inhibit performance in others and will only deteriorate if left alone, contaminating more people and incurring hidden costs for the organization. It takes many forms like rudeness, yelling, shunning, mobbing, gossiping, refusing to talk to or acknowledge others, harassing, incessant complaining to supervisors, ignoring directives, and slow working.

FOCUS ON INTERESTS NOT POSITIONS . . .

A basic problem in communication lies not so much in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each person's needs, desires, concerns, and fears. One person may say to another, "You're such a perfectionist in everything you do around here, and I'm tired of



you thinking you're always right." That position is something the speaker has decided upon, but the interest is what caused that decision. The underlying interest might be a lack of training and a fear of competition with a skilled coworker. The other person may not knowingly be competing but merely trying to do a good job, but the perception enables the conflict. Interests motivate people and are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions

WHY IS LISTENING SO IMPORTANT . . .

Listening is an art by which we use empathy to reach across the space between us. Passive attention doesn't work. Not only is listening an active process, it often takes a deliberate effort to suspend our own needs and reactions. To listen well you must hold back what you have to say and control the urge to interrupt or argue. The art of listening requires a submersion of the self and immersion in the other. This is not always easy, especially when we are interested but too concerned with controlling or instructing or reforming the other person to be truly open to their point of view.



Conflict resolution is frequently one of the most challenging aspects of team leadership. Here are some of the ways team members can help manage conflicts:

- Listen with empathy and respect
- Allow others to express their concerns
- Look deeper, beyond what is being said, to understand the real meaning
- Be self-reflective and accountable—acknowledge if you are at fault
- Express emotions in a positive way—to encourage understanding and conflict resolution
- Prioritize—try to separate what is important and what gets in the way of understanding
- Learn from difficult behaviours—use what you have observed to see if outcomes have been affected

Good leaders, recognize that conflict:

- Doesn't need to be destructive.
- Should be leveraged rather than "managed" or "controlled."
- Can be handled with compassion. Taking a compassionate approach could mean more—but healthier—conflict.

Give the other person ownership in the resolution. Don't sell your ideas but engage in a joint problem-solving discussion. Ask what's important and be sure agreement is reached in respect for each of you.

Negative conflict, characterized by struggling against other people, drains energy, which is costly to companies, teams and relationships



Likky helps leaders find their Blind spots to gain control of their businesses and relationships. He is a sought after keynote speaker and corporate leadership coach.

For businesses to excel they need to search for organizational and personal blind spots because they are why we fail to have authentic connections with people. They are the reason we struggle to find our purpose and passion in life and why we don't have a clear focus to get the outcomes we want in our work and our lives.

Getting to the source of what's driving our behaviors requires vulnerability and a willingness to accept how we show up to others, which can be uncomfortable. Especially, if we are not ready to accept our flaws and faults.

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