

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON LEADERSHIP BLIND SPOTS; A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract; Leadership Blind Spots means, not or unable to see beyond his/her vision by a leader. Those who aspire to become an entrepreneur, a professional in any field, a manager or a leader who has a vision will have to take the road uphill task. Anyone aspiring to become a business leader, entrepreneur or an effective professional needs to be aware of these conversational blind spots. They usually depend on the quality of our culture, which depends on the quality of our relationships, which depends on the quality of our conversations. Everything happens through conversations. Most importantly we tend to loose focus on certain blind spots which occur inadvertantly most of the time and at times supernaturally due to the leaders not sensing it. The blind spots are five like false assumptions, underestimating emotions, lack of empathy, making our own meaning, assuming shared meaning. Any leader need to be alert on the above five blind spots and need to take guard like having his concience questioning before speaking like Do I need to be on guard — and how?, Can I trust this person?,Where do I belong? Do I fit in? What do I need to be successful? and How do I create value with others?. This Exploratory study will reveal those conceptual clarity on the Leadership blind spots and its psychological implications on the individual and leadership personality for personal and professional success. This study will particularly focus on Leadership blind spots.

Key Words; Leadership, Conversation, Blind Spot, Conversational Intelligence, Leader, Entrepreneurship, Levels of Blind Spots, Vision

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Introduction; Successful leaders should be an effective communicator in what ever he communicates and should have to be very vocal, very purposeful be able pitch their visions, strategies, products and services to investors, banks, employees, customers, clients, and partners exactly to the situations. Unfortunately, too many leaders blow critical meetings and discover too late they can't speak to influence and fail to connect. These leaders have communication blind spots or, more technically speaking, Low Conversational Intelligence in short blind spot. Conversational Intelligence scientifically is a level of trust a leader create with others and the quality of interaction the leaders make according to social scientists. Psychologically any leader with high conversational intelligence would activate the prefrontal cortex of an audience member's brain, a section that enables trust and good judgment. In contrast a leader with CI (conversational intelligence), on the other hand, engages the lower cortex, where fear and distrust reside. Increasing rate of CI (conversational intelligence) often correlate directly with business successes as well a high predictor of leadership success. Breakdowns happen when people talk past each other, not to each other. Once leaders become aware of their conversational blind spots, they can boost their C-IQ. Recent scientific experiments and psychological discoveries asserts that people can learn to identify what is going wrong in conversations and how to "flip the switch" in their brains and others' brains to get communications back on a productive neural path. Here are three common blind spots and how to prevent them.

Objectives; (i) To analyse what is a Blind Spot and how it sets in a Leader.

(ii) To classify different kinds of Blind Spots in a Leader.

(iii) To examine the correlation among the Blind Spots occurring in a Leader

(iv) To suggest remedial measures through the recent scientific approaches made in the field of study

Scope; Can be evaluated to avoid blind spots in a leader and inculcate a curriculum in leadership training and development

Methodology; Secondary data Analysis with Cohort Study, and Meta analytical review of related scientific literature study done earlier.

Data; Secondary data from Non-Clinical Settings

Objective (i); To analyse what is a Blind Spot and how it sets in a Leader;

Conversational Blind Spots ; usually it occurs like when fear dominates, the primitive brain takes over, releasing cortisol and catecholamines, a hormone that's released during emotional or physical stress. These chemicals shut down the brain's prefrontal cortex, or executive functions, which allow for sophisticated strategies. Instead of responding intelligently and creatively to investors, banks or customers, a leader could freeze, coming across as dumb, defensive or unstable for partnership. The only solution is to acknowledge the fear. The people they're speaking with will feel that positive neural connection and cooperate. **Not Hearing What Was Really Said.** Leaders need to gracefully confirm what others are saying by asking discovery questions such as, "Where are you in all this?" or "How do you feel about the pace of innovation?". **Seeing Around the Corner;** a leader need to know that what to and how to talk as what one talk matter very much psychologically, the better any person talks the better they feel. Human bodies crave high, and people become blind to the conversational dynamics. While anyone is rewarded or appreciated neurochemicals releases as like it does for physical pain. While a feeling of rejection starts a "fight, flight" response, releasing cortisol, shuts down the prefrontal cortex, or executive brain, letting the amygdala, or lower brain, take over. To compound conversational challenges, the brain disconnects every 12 to 18 seconds to evaluate and process, meaning we're often paying as much attention to our own thoughts as we are to other people's words.

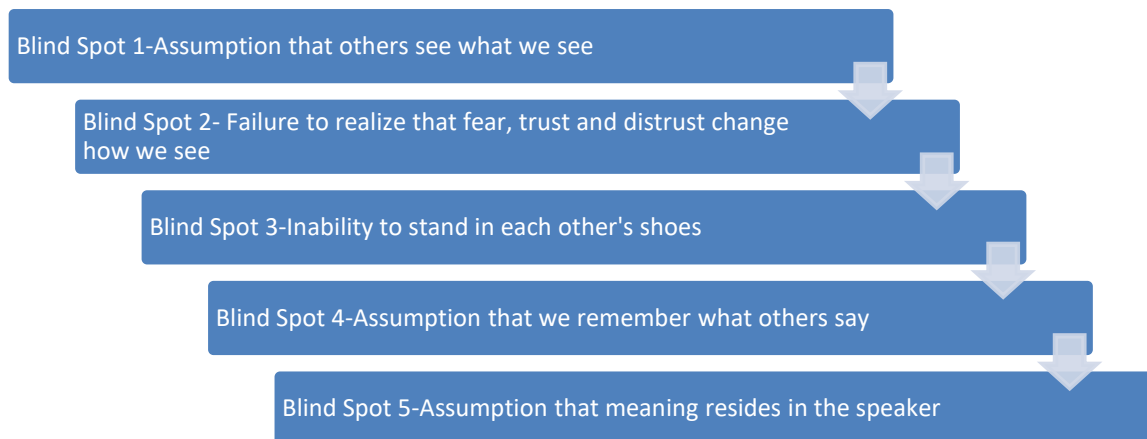


Figure; 1; Blind Spots Areas in a Leader; Concept; Judith Glacer ; Graphic Source; Author Dr.C.Karthikeyan

Five Types of Conversational Blind Spots;

- **Blind Spot #1** The first blind spot involves an assumption that others see what we see, feel what we feel, and think what we think.

- **Blind Spot #2** The failure to realize that fear, trust, and distrust change how we see and interpret reality, and therefore how we talk about it.
- **Blind Spot #3** An inability to stand in each other's shoes when we are fearful or upset.
- **Blind Spot #4** The assumption that we remember what others say, when we actually remember what we think about what others say.
- **Blind Spot #5** The assumption that meaning resides in the speaker, when in fact it resides in the listener.



Figure; 1; Conversational Blind Spot in a Leader which grows in time; Concept; Judit Glaser; Graphic Design **Source;** Dr.C.Karthikeyan

As the above graphical display depicts a leader face the embedded precess of; Paying attention to and minimizing the time you "own" the conversational space. When you open the space for others to contribute you allow them the time to process new insights that can have a dramatic impact on 'what comes next' in the conversation. **Sharing that space by asking open-ended discovery questions, to which you don't know the answers, so you stay curious.** (i.e., What influenced your thinking? What ideas might be valuable for us to discuss? How might we address this challenge together?). **Listening to connect not judge or reject.** When we listen to connect we connect through our heart, and prefrontal cortex - which also activates our centers of empathy, openness and receptivity to others points of view. When we listen to judge, we are listening to see when we fit our ideas into the conversation, we look for what is missing in the other person's perspective and we often 'trump them' which creates resistance and 'lock down.' **Double-clicking on what others say to facilitate sharing and discovering and opening the space for deeper connection and relationship building.** Too often we listen to confirm what

we know or defend what we know. Double-clicking on what others are saying keeps us in the higher brain, expands our connectivity, and builds a stronger partnership with others.

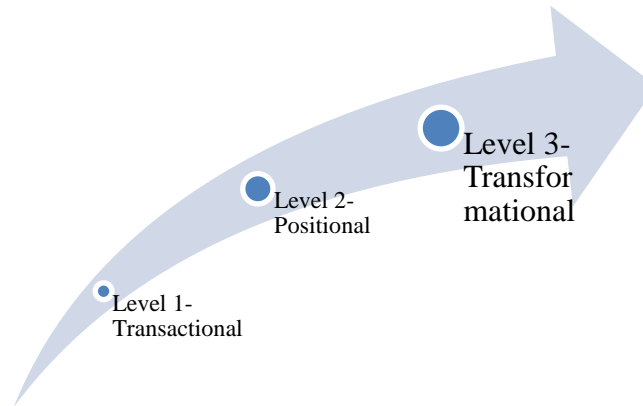
Conversational Intelligence & Reality Gaps; A persons or for this study a leaders blind spots spring from reality gaps. Everyone’s reality is not the same. Even those in the same room at the same time will take away different impressions of a paticular time together. That is why culture is so important. It creates the conversational rituals and practices that harmonize our experiences, create a shared language, and help People bridge and connect with others more fully—it creates a shared reality. Judith E. Glaser is CEO of Benchmark Communications, Inc. and Chairman of The Creating WE Institute in her newest, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results* (Bibliomotion, 2013) states, “Human beings are the most highly social species on this planet. When we succeed in connecting deeply with others—heart to heart and head to head—trust is at its all-time high, and people work in concert in extraordinary ways.”

Our words can facilitate healthy, trusting conversations — or cause others to shut down with fear, caution and worry. Bad conversations trigger our distrust network; good conversations trigger our trust network. **As Glaser notes:** “Unhealthy conversations are at the root of distrust, deceit, betrayal and avoidance —which leads to lower productivity and innovation, and ultimately, lower success.” When you want to win and subsequently fight hard, you may go into overdrive as you persuade others to adopt your point of view.

3 Conversation Levels; Leaders commonly rely on two types of conversations: telling and selling. When telling, they try to clearly specify what employees need to do. When selling, they try to persuade them with reasons for doing it. Employees may understand “what” to do and even “why” they should do it. But they’ll never fully engage unless they’re part of meaningful conversations that encourage connection, sharing and discovery.

The following table offers a graphic representation of Glaser’s identified conversation levels: **LEVEL I – Transactional;** How to exchange data and information. **LEVEL II – Positional;** How to work with power and influence. **LEVEL III – Transformational;** How to co-create the future for mutual success. Too often, people get stuck in Level II conversations because all are addicted to being right. We realize that: • We shape the meanings our words have on others. • We need to validate our words’ true meanings. • Breakdowns occur when others interpret our

words in unanticipated ways. • Breakdowns occur when we try to persuade others that our meanings are the right ones. • Breakthroughs occur when we take time to share and discover. • Breakthroughs occur when we co-create and partner to create a shared reality.



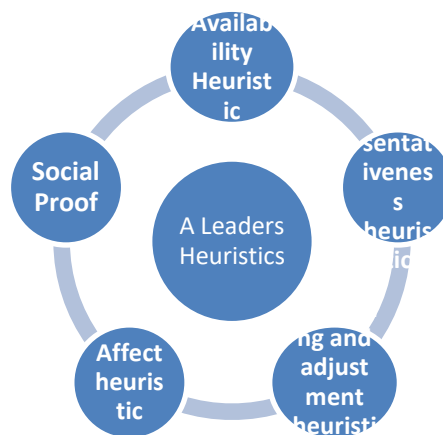
Figure; 3; Leader Conversational Levels ; **Source; Glacer;** Graph Dr.C.Karthikeyan

Developments in Identifying Blind Spots; Dr. Maynard Brusman one of the foremost coaches in the United States utilizes a wide variety of assessments in his work with senior executives and upper level managers, and is adept at helping his clients both develop higher levels of emotional intelligence and achieve breakthrough business results. When a leader expresses at length their bodies release a higher level of reward hormones, and they feel great. The more they talk, the better they feel. He asserts; **Technical blind spots are easier to identify** and alter: one version is judging new things by an outdated standard (e.g., “Why would anyone want a phone where you can’t feel the keys?”), another is favoring a discipline that a leader is familiar with or interested in at the expense of criteria that their bosses/customers will be using to evaluate satisfaction (e.g. “Hey, we put on another terrific sales conference, didn’t we — what, how did we go over budget by that much!?”), and a third is focusing at the wrong depth, often on trivial details. The people who follow deserve better leadership over time, and that’s why the best leaders are not just open to learning, but are eager to learn new tools, new ideas, and new perspectives that can help improve their effectiveness and minimize their blind spots

Psychological blind spots; like the visual blind spots when looking at the road through car mirrors, every leaders have psychological blind spots - aspects of personalities that are hidden from their view. These might be annoying habits like interrupting or bragging, or they might

be deeper fears or desires that are too threatening to acknowledge. Although it's generally not pleasant to confront these aspects of ourselves, doing so can be very useful when it comes to personal growth, and when it comes to improving relationships with others - there is undoubtedly something we do that, unbeknownst to us, drives the significant others, roommates, or coworkers a little crazy. So how do you know what your blind spots are? One place that blind spots can be found is in strong reactions. An unusually strong negative or positive reaction or stance may suggest engagement in a process Freud called *reaction formation*. Reaction formation involves unconsciously transforming an unacceptable or undesirable impulse into its opposite.

Heuristics is a psychological term that describes the mental shortcuts people use to make decisions or judgments. This usually involves focusing on one aspect of a complicated issue to the exclusion of others. Under most circumstances, this is an elegantly efficient way of handling complex situations and data, but it can sometimes lead to cognitive biases and inaccurate assessments outside our awareness. Heuristics are popularly used in the marketing, leadership and political arenas for tactics to control and influence people. A more thoughtful approach will enable leaders to have better choices and evaluations of people and circumstances. There are several types of heuristics that leaders often use to save time and energy when overwhelmed with large amounts of information that cannot be easily comprehended. Here are the important ones that any leader needs to be aware of ;



Figure; 4; Cognitive Bias Development Process in a Leader ; Kinds of Heuristics; Concept;Dr Maynard Brusman; Graphical Concept Source; Dr.C.Karthikeyan

1. **Availability heuristic:** Availability heuristics occur when a leader estimate or make a judgment about something based on how easily to recall relevant examples from specific circumstances.
2. **Representativeness heuristic:** The representativeness heuristic is a form of stereotyping where a leaders makes judgments and decisions about an event, based on how similar it is to a prototype, model or example.
3. **Anchoring and adjustment heuristic:** The anchoring heuristic influences how leaders intuitively estimate probabilities.
4. **Affect heuristic:** The affect heuristic occurs when a leader perceive a situation to be high benefit and low risk.
5. **Social proof:** Social proof occurs when a leader overly reliant on the cues that we receive from our external environment. This often occurs in socially ambiguous situations in which we are unsure about how to behave. We might assume the people around us know what to do and we're quick to emulate their behavior so that we can fit in. Unless we have a mind of our own and strong sense of self, most of us look to others to guide our actions and to learn about what's acceptable and what isn't acceptable. We tend to speak in the same jargon and dress in similar style to our closest friends. We will slow down our speed if the other cars ahead of us in the highway are slowing down, even if we don't know why. Marketers use social proof to get consumers to trust their products by getting celebrity endorsements.
6. **Scarcity heuristic:** The scarcity heuristic influences us to believe that the perceived value of an item (or person) is higher and of better quality if it is rare and difficult to acquire.

Bias blind spot; a leader's cognitive bias is other wise a bias blind spot according to Emily Pronin can give the understanding that leaders exhibit the bias blind spot like thinking that a leader himself is less biased than other people while it may not be the actual fact.

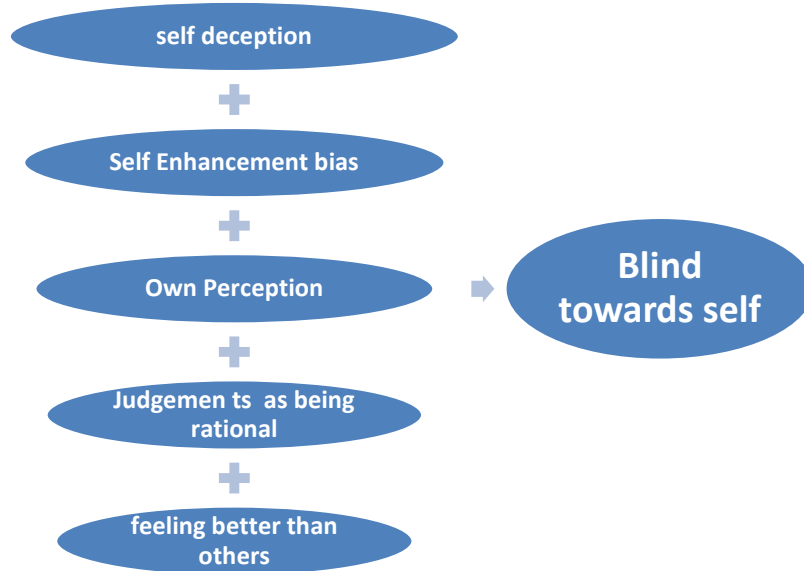


Figure ;4; Bias Blindness Stages ; Source; Author; Dr.C.Karthikeyan

Causes; Bias blind spots may be caused by a variety of other biases and self-deceptions; Self-enhancement biases may play a role, in that people are motivated to view themselves in a positive light. Biases are generally seen as undesirable, so leaders tend to think of their own perceptions and judgments as being rational, accurate, and free of bias.

Psychological Blind Spots in a Leader; A leader **has to** innovate and for which leader must be able to think out of the box—keeping fresh ideas coming. Taking leadership to the next level and providing programs that “go deep” means literally digging deeper. For many leaders tunnel vision for blind spots increases. Becoming a conscious observer an ongoing process, of course, to create greater awareness from blind spots are:

Overcoming Psychological Blind Spots						
Be Humble	Be Authentic	Be Asking	Be Open	Be Relating	Be Proactive	Be relaxed

Figure; 5; Overcoming Psychological Blind Spots; Concept ; Judith Glaser; Graphic Display source; Dr.C.Karthikeyan

- **Be humble:** leaders should think others know more than them and that allows them to be present, actively listen. This opens new avenues and new possibilities.
- **Be authentic:** Create, build and establish relationships with people based upon authenticity. Create a space where people can share openly and freely.
- **Be asking:** Perform a regular pulse check by requesting feedback and input. Performing an informal evaluation of performance and results among colleagues and stakeholders has become quite helpful for me. Ask for feedback and listening to it builds trust and creates stronger relationships.
- **Be open:** I have to step out of myself and set judgments aside to keep an open mind and be present when people are sharing. I have to avoid closing down and dismissing the feedback. Know that what that person is saying has validity and is true for them.
- **Be relating:** Develop a relationship with a peer group, mentor, coach or some trusted advisor(s) with whom I can open up and share my feelings, concerns and talk through challenges.
- **Be proactive:** I have to proactively allow others to contribute and share their wisdom, experience and passion. I have to be careful not come from a place of expectation. This creates buy-in and allows contribution.
- **Be relaxed:** Getting into a relaxed alpha state also opens my mind up to blind spots. There are techniques and tools that can support the process of getting there and remaining there on a more consistent basis that may include music, meditation, etc. This is about getting the ego out of the way for me.

In conclusion, the secret to sustaining innovation and breaking down that brick wall is discovering and managing blind spots.

Conclusions and Suggestions (From Therapists and Experts are)

8 Ways to Conquer Your Leadership Blind Spots;

John C. Maxwell defines a blind spot as "an area in the lives of people in which they *continually* do not see themselves or their situation realistically." Shows that the senior leaders in an organization are more likely to overrate themselves and to develop blind spots that can hinder their effectiveness as leaders.

Raise awareness of the top blind spots. shows the 10 blind spots that are most risky to personal and organizational success. The top three are: under-communicating strategic direction and priorities, poorly communicating expectations, and waiting for poor performance to improve. Leaders are often surprised when stakeholders complain that there isn't enough communication about the business's vision and strategy. There is a communication gap between what leaders think is enough and what stakeholders need. Communication also extends to one-on-one leadership conversations. Leaders often fail to see the harm that is done to the organization when they consistently avoid having the difficult conversation with a non-performer, hoping the issue will resolve itself.

Don't hire in your own image. , Guy Kawasaki includes one of the most pervasive blind spots that leaders often have: Hiring people who are like them instead of hiring individuals who have complementary skills. Hiring people who are similar results in organizational weaknesses. As Kawasaki puts it, "You need to balance off all the talents in a company."

Establishing a peer coaching arrangement. Every leader can benefit from peer coaching with leaders in other organizations. As a business owner, consider peer coaching with a noncompeting business that's the same size. Les McKeown says, "Most organizational blind spots are size-related, not industry-specific. In other words, your blind spots will have more in common with other businesses of a similar size and age than they will with other businesses in the same industry."

Examining the past history. To gain insight into behaviors that may not serve well, think back on past successes and failures as a leader. This kind of introspective inventory can yield some powerful insights.

Understanding habits. Blind spots are not necessarily weaknesses—they can also be habits or instinctive reactions to situations.

Placing a high priority on relational skills; John C. Maxwell states a simple, but powerful truth: People can usually trace their successes and failures to relationships in their lives. Every

time something good or something difficult has happened to you, you can most likely point it back to some relationship you had. Studies show that only 15 percent of a person's success is determined by job knowledge and technical skills, and 85 percent is determined by an individual's attitude and ability to relate to other people. As Maxwell observes, many leaders have big relational blind spots.

Consider the downside of your strengths. It's a known fact that our gifts, taken to the extreme, can be liabilities. For example, one of your strengths might be that you are prudent in your decision-making. But what you view as caution, taken to the extreme, might result in fear of risk taking. In the long run, this can work against you. You may pride yourself in being a visionary, but taken to the extreme, you may bounce off in too many directions, frustrating others on the team by switching gears too often. List all your strengths, and reflect on how they manifest themselves in your leadership style. If you need help in this area, work with a mentor or coach. Consider asking your constituents for feedback. We rise as a leader when we have the courage to ask, "How are my actions affecting performance?"

The most critical part of avoiding the blind spot is to recognize that even the most objective among us has one. Above all, "People seem to have no idea how biased they are. Whether a good decision-maker or a bad one, everyone thinks that they are less biased than their peers," said Carey Morewedge, associate professor of marketing at Boston University. "This susceptibility to the bias blind spot appears to be pervasive, and is unrelated to people's intelligence, self-esteem, and actual ability to make unbiased judgments and decisions." They also found that people with a high bias blind spot are those most likely to ignore the advice of peers or experts, and are least likely to learn from de-biasing training that could improve the quality of their decisions. "Our research found that the extent to which one is blind to her own bias has important consequences for the quality of decision-making. People more prone to think they are less biased than others are less accurate at evaluating their abilities relative to the abilities of others, they listen less to others' advice, and are less likely to learn from training that would help them make less biased judgments."

Improving Conversations; Leaders can take several basic steps to enhance the quality of your conversations:


- Slow down. A conversation is *not* a race.
- Breathe deeply. Take appropriate pauses. Allow time to process conversations.
- Check your emotions.
- Ask discovery questions.
- Validate shared goals and meanings.

If you're like many leaders, you tend to march forward at a breakneck pace to achieve goals and objectives — a pattern that prevents you from seeing the impact your conversations have on others. You may forget that your words are rarely neutral and have histories informed by years of use. Every experience you have adds a new layer of meaning to your conversations.

It's crucial to work on managing any underlying feelings of rejection and protection. Only then can you harness your ability to reach out to others and achieve mutual understanding. Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard once said that our mind can either be our best friend or our worst enemy, depending on how we use it. When we maintain a steady awareness of our potential blind spots and limited belief systems, we strengthen our alliance with our mental faculty and we'll find it easier to align with its fundamental purpose, which is to create a life of boundless joy, love and possibilities.

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