



Dear Friend, The Rental

Wouldn't you know it! When I need it the most, my car breaks down!

Thankfully, my hubby went right to work and secured a rental so that not a beat was missed. Well, not technically, anyway.

Although this replacement ride gets me where I need to go and has all of the essential gadgets, it's...well...not mine. After all, when operating in a different vehicle, you can't function on instinct regarding gears, or the control panel, or radio presets. Things that are second nature to you in your own car are foreign now. And, we won't even mention having to get used to new mirrors and a whole different body structure. Can you say, "Blind spots"? I know I'm getting older, but these days I've really been feeling like an old lady behind the wheel, having to change lanes with *super* care to ensure that I don't inadvertently come over on someone who just happens to be where I want to go.

Blind spots. They can be treacherous on the road. They can be equally perilous in the workplace.

So, we dedicate this last 2014 edition of *EA Insights* to the topic of blind spots. May this issue help you to discover and overcome those sometimes hidden areas that may be standing in the way of you accomplishing everything you desire.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
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Blind Spots

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Whether assisting companies or individual professionals, our work through *Executive Advantage* allows us to support people who are driven to accomplish great things. So, since *drive* is a given, why do these businesses or individuals engage us? They call on us because they're facing an opportunity that they want support to undertake or because they're grappling with a challenge that they're unsure of how to overcome. Enter *Executive Advantage*.

As we work together, and begin peeling back the layers of the onion that constitutes the current situation, frequently some fact, trait, or habit arises that knocks the client(s) for a loop. Yup, they may be in that workplace all day, every day; they may be sitting right in the middle of those meetings; they may be talking with those folks continually but, somehow, a particular piece of information, or a specific perception of them, or the impact of a habit...gets lost.

Blind spot

In the work world, a *blind spot* is that business area, or subject, or attitude, or person about which you are unable to see, hear, act, or make decisions clearly.

Now, as you read that last sentence, did a *personal* blind spot come to mind? It probably didn't. That's because it's a BLIND spot; you don't usually grasp it on your own.

But, I bet, as you read that description, you got a clear picture of something that gets in the way for a boss, co-worker, or another person in your network. Indeed. That's because we often can see what others are missing. *Their* stuff isn't blind to *us*...just our own.

Interestingly, we typically chalk blind spots up as negative. That's not always the case. There are times when others recognize skill, ability, or potential in us that we fail to see in ourselves. Even though it's good, that too can be a blind spot and one that prevents us from taking full advantage of prospects.

So, positive or negative, blind spots exist.

If blind spots are inevitable, though, are we just doomed? Is there anything we can do about them? Thankfully, it's not hopeless, and there absolutely are options.

Become Aware of Your Blind Spots

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"Quotes"

"[W]e're going to take this one step at a time and keep a clear vision[.]"

~Madeline Albright

"Others have been more willing to take risks. Some say [they are] actually being blind and missing out on huge opportunities for growth."

~Daniel Barcelo

"We have a blind spot in this situation, a major national blind spot."

~Robert Bennett

"A blind man knows he cannot see, and is glad to be led, ... but he that is blind in his understanding, which is the worst blindness of all, believes he sees as the best, and scorns a guide."

~Samuel Butler

*"The weakness ... is our blindness, a cultural blind spot which some call ignorance.... *** [O]ur cultural ways of doing, perceiving and relating, blind us to this reality."*

~Michael W. Fox

"I have met people who you would expect to be brilliant and they have a blind spot for [it]. And I have met people without as much education who do very well[.]"

~Wayne Gould

"None so deaf as those that will not hear. None so blind as those that will not see."

~Mathew Henry

"We're not there yet, but we've got a clear vision for it."

~Keith Hodnett

"You need a very, exceptionally clear vision."

~Ron Johnson



You'll always be haunted by your blind spots if they remain under wraps. In order to make any progress, the first step has to be to pause periodically and figure out what they are!

In working with **Executive Advantage** clients, we support their efforts to "pause" through various approaches (assessments, personal introspection exercises, coaching conversations, etc.). Such methods help to shine the light on an organization's or a person's blind spots.

For instance, one of the services we offer companies is strategic planning support. Early on in the **Executive Advantage** history, the approach to these engagements was just to jump right into the planning process with the group of execs that had been assembled. Sure, the result was a technically sound plan, but its likelihood of being executed was questionable. Why? Although the group often had research data outlining trends and opportunities, results tracking prior period outcomes, and indications of where it wanted to go next, for far too many of them there was a huge pink elephant in the room that folks either didn't want to touch or that conveniently hid itself from critical decision makers. In other words, there were blind spots that, unless tackled, reduced the wonderful planning work we were doing to simply a nice exercise.

So, our approach changed. To unearth an organization's systemic or cultural blind spots or its pockets of obstruction, we decided to incorporate a full-staff organizational self-assessment or at least an executive/ management-level profile into the process. This enables us all to gain an appreciation for what's actually happening internally. The goal is to identify the good that's potentially being missed as well as the not-so-good that needs correction in order to build on a solid foundation. Unless you get a broad view of what's going on, it's impossible to plan realistically much less to follow through on what's been mapped out.

Now, businesses aren't the only ones who need help in identifying blind spots. For an individual, we may use a 360° tool that solicits input from various perspectives representing that person's circle (self, supervisor, peers, direct reports, clients, vendors, etc.). For instance, we just wrapped up 360° assessments with the managers in one of our client organizations. It was an experience that allowed people not only to consider their own strengths and challenges, but also to see how they are viewed by others. Invariably, during debrief sessions, there was surprise and a "Wow, I didn't realize that I come across that way!", when a challenge was uncovered or "Really, people see that in me!" in connection with a previously unappreciated positive characteristic or ability.

Behavioral assessments also are valid ways for a person to laser in on specific aspects of thought, motivation, or conduct and, in doing so, to confirm those parts of self with which they are well familiar and also to get a sense of the facets of self that may be easier to miss or ignore. Recently, I was conducting a debrief session with a woman who had completed one of the behavioral profiles we use. As I summarized the results in a particular section, her immediate response was, "Oh, I don't think that's me at all." My probing of why she felt as she did prompted more and more talking about her world as of late -- a recent corporate merger and new responsibilities for her position, both which were moving her out of her comfort zone and causing some angst. The more she revealed the more she was able to recognize a blind spot about which she had been unaware!

Develop Approaches to Cope with Your Blind Spots

Coming to grips with the fact that you've got a blind spot is Step 1. What comes next is figuring out how to handle what you've just learned.

Knowledge of some blind spots provokes an "Okay, I/we need to be on guard against that" response. There may be no proactive steps in order. The take-away simply is the acknowledgement that, in certain situations, you're prone to a particular type of thinking or action that may be counter-productive to what you're trying to accomplish. And so, forewarned is forearmed.

Bringing other blind spots to light, however, may require the development of an actual approach. Such action may enable you to correct or mitigate the risk associated with a negative trait, or it may aid you in recognizing untapped potential that better positions you for opportunities you might otherwise let pass you by. So, outline what you'll do (or won't do), and be specific. Let someone else in on your new revelation and proposed approaches, and see if collective thinking can help you strengthen your responses. Commit to doing periodic check-ins to measure your progress both in detecting situations that involve this blind spot and in responding productively when they occur.

A blind spot doesn't need to be a perpetual problem. It is possible to see it...and, even better, to determine how you'll overcome it.



Let us help you uncover and address your blind spots. Contact us today to explore how **Executive Advantage** can partner with you. We're here to help you build your [thriving business](#) or [career](#).

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"Because you're not what I would have you be, I blind myself to who, in truth, you are."

~Madeleine L'Engle

"All things will be clear and distinct to the man who does not hurry; haste is blind and improvident."

~Titus Livius

"Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for...."

~Peter Marshall

"A lot of ... groups have a huge blind spot on this."

~Tom Morrissey

"It's like a blind turn on a highway. You can't see what's coming, so you don't really know how to prepare."

~Piper Perabo

"These areas ... are in a ... blind spot."

~Robert Puentes

"Self-interest makes some people blind, and others sharp-sighted."

~Francois VI, Duc de La Rochefoucauld

"Every man can see things far off but is blind to what is near."

~Sophocles

"At that moment of realization I knew that I had been blind because I had wished not to see it...."

~Ernst Toller

"I was deaf and dumb and blind to all but me, myself, and I."

~Loretta Young

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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