



Leadership Blindspots: How Successful Leaders Identify and Overcome the Weaknesses That Matter

By Robert Bruce Shaw

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Leadership Blindspots is a comprehensive guide that helps individuals surface and act on unrecognized weaknesses that can impair their effectiveness, damage their organizations and derail their careers. Written by an author with years of experience working closely with leaders as a management consultant, the book provides a useful model for understanding how blindspots operate and the risks they pose. At the same time, *Leadership Blindspots* offers a clear roadmap to becoming a better leader by offering pragmatic advice on how to manage blindspots more effectively. Topics include:

- A framework to understand why blindspots threaten all leaders - and are particularly prevalent in the most visionary and driven of leaders
- A description of different levels of blindness - those about yourself as a leader, the capabilities of your team, the strengths and weaknesses of your company and the changes occurring in your industry
- A description of the most common leadership blindspots and surveys to assess your areas of vulnerability
- Actions you can take in five key areas to identify and manage your own unique risks, as well as the blindspots you see in those with whom you work

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Editorial Review

Review

"Robert Shaw's book *Leadership Blindspots* underscores the need to be both confident in your leadership capabilities and, at the same time, open to hearing contrary points of view, including feedback about your leadership impact. Individuals at all levels of a company will benefit from Robert's clear advice on how to lead effectively."

--Sylvia Montero, author, *Make It Your Business*

"Optimism is both necessary and problematic for those leading a company. This book is particularly useful for entrepreneurial leaders who need to be careful that their drive and passion does not blind them to the challenges they face in growing a business. *Leadership Blindspots* helps you surface what you need to know to be successful."

--Michael J. Kelly, chief executive officer, On Call International

"Leaders are sometimes blinded to the opportunities to grow their firms because they can't see beyond their current business model. Robert Shaw highlights the need to test one's core beliefs and assumptions. In particular, he offers pragmatic advice on building a leadership team that can look at a firm's vulnerabilities and think beyond the status quo."

--Mark Ronald, former president and chief executive officer, BAE Systems, Inc.

From the Author

Q&A with Robert Bruce Shaw

How do you define blindspots?

Blindspots are unrecognized weaknesses or threats that can harm a leader and his or her company.

Are there different degrees of blindness?

There are times when leaders are completely blindsided by a weakness or threat and other situations when they are partially aware of a weakness or threat but fail to understand its potential impact or the need for action.

What are the different types of blindspots?

We often think of blindspots in terms of a leader's self-perceptions and, in particular, the impact of his or her behavior. For example, a leader with an authoritarian style may believe, incorrectly, that he is being open and inclusive. He does not realize that his style is undermining the accountability of others (as they know that key decisions will ultimately be made by him). However, blindspots also exist in relation to the ways in which a leader views his or her team, organization, and markets. Blindspots in these other areas are equally if not more important in some situations than how a leader views him or herself.

In the book, you give examples of blindspots that persist despite the harm they can cause.

Some leaders get in their own way by making similar mistakes over and over. Consider the leader, smart and successful, who at times misreads others. In particular, she thinks their values and motives are similar to her own when in some cases they are not - which results in a number of poor staffing decisions that hurt her and her business. This is not only a weakness but a weakness that she doesn't recognize in herself. One way to gain awareness of your blindspots is to look for patterns in the mistakes you make over time.

What is the best way to ensure that blindspots don't harm a leader?

Leaders need to create mechanisms that surface the blindspots that matter. This is the equivalent of what you find in new cars that have a blindspot warning system that signals the driver when another car has entered his or her blindspot (the area where you can't see another car approaching). Such mechanisms are important for leaders because their own internal warning capabilities always have limitations. You need to put into place external mechanisms that warn you when your blindspots are potentially dangerous.

What is an example of such a mechanism?

One of the best is a confidant who knows and respects you--but will tell you when you are failing to see a weakness or threat. Savvy leaders have people who act as warning systems in different areas when they are viewing an issue in a distorted or incomplete manner (such as the viability of a particular strategy or the success of a new initiative). But you need at least one person, someone you trust in regard to his or her capabilities and motives, who is first among equals in offering you feedback across a variety of areas.

At the same time, you argue that what others see is not always on the mark.

This occurs for at least three reasons. First, others may not see you in a wide variety of situations and thus may have less accurate information than you have about yourself. Second, others don't have direct access to your "internal" information, things about yourself that you understand better than those observing you--such as your intent in making a decision. Third, blindspots don't exist just in the person being observed. What others observe about you sometimes says more about them than you. Leaders need to understand how they are perceived but then assess if change is needed in areas in which their self-perceptions are different than the perceptions of others.

You also maintain that some blindspots are positive.

Most people believe that awareness is always beneficial -- that we should confront reality in all situations. This view is almost always true in that denial can have devastating consequences for both a leader and his or her company. However, it is false when awareness erodes a leader's confidence and ability to inspire others. Blindspots, in some situations, have a positive influence that both leaders and their followers need to understand. No less a leader than Steve Jobs had what his team members in the early days of Apple called a "reality distortion field." He learned, over time, to better recognize and manage the downsides of his towering strengths.

What are the key takeaways from the book?

- All leaders have blindspots because of a range of psychological and organizational factors. There are varying degrees of blindness but no one escapes unscathed.

- Most blindspots are destructive but some are adaptive. The skill is knowing which require your attention and which are better left alone.

- You need to surround yourself with people, processes and practices to surface the blindspots that have the potential to derail you. The book describes how the best leaders do this.

From the Inside Flap

Good leaders become great by skillfully managing their own vulnerabilities

Leadership Blindspots: How Successful Leaders Identify and Overcome the Weaknesses That Matter is a comprehensive guide to recognizing and acting on the weak points that can impair effectiveness, diminish results, and harm a career. The book contains examples, worksheets, and surveys that illustrate the practical application of the advice presented. An online questionnaire helps readers discover their own leadership vulnerabilities, and the book provides a road map for creating a targeted plan to increase awareness in the areas that will impact their success.

The blindspot risk is that leaders fail to respond to weaknesses or threats due to a variety of factors including the complexity of their organizations, over-confidence in their own capabilities, and from being surrounded by deferential subordinates. *Leadership Blindspots* provides a useful model for understanding how blindspots operate and why they persist, but at the same time suggests real, actionable steps to improvement. The book details a range of techniques that make blindspots stand out in sharp relief, so action can be taken before severe damage occurs—to a leader or his or her company. Topics include:

- A framework to understand the threats posed by blindspots
- The four most important types of blindspots—self, team, company, and markets
- Detailed case studies of blindspots in leaders across a variety of industries
- A summary of the most common leadership blindspots
- Corrective practices that help mitigate the risks that blindspots pose

The one characteristic great leaders share is the constant desire for self-improvement. Good can always be better. Some weaknesses and threats are called blindspots because they are invisible to the individual but have the potential to wreak havoc on one's reputation and long-term success. Identifying and fixing crucial problems is the leader's job, and sometimes the most debilitating problems are with the leaders themselves. *Leadership Blindspots* is the first step toward owning and addressing one's vulnerabilities and, as a result, becoming a more effective leader.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sheila Walker:

The reason? Because this *Leadership Blindspots: How Successful Leaders Identify and Overcome the Weaknesses That Matter* is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will jolt you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such amazing way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book get such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to

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