

## **The Leader: Blind Spots**

by **Frederick E Roach**

I recently had my annual eye exam. My ophthalmologist told me my eyesight had improved -- for the second year in a row. It would be great if my improved eyesight kept me from having "blind spots" in my thinking and actions.

When it comes to leadership, it would be fantastic if perfect vision was possible. We know this doesn't happen. No single leader has every desirable leadership trait essential for total effectiveness.

This recognition shouldn't preclude us from working to improve our personal blind spots. Each of us has "areas where vision is hindered or obscured; a prejudice, or area of ignorance, that one has but is often unaware of." This definition of "blind spot": is from Webster's New World Dictionary.

Blind spots do not have to be permanent. Physically, we may create a temporary blind spot when we look at the sun. We're warned to wear protective glasses when observing an eclipse. Mentally, we can learn to deal with leadership blind spots by taking precautionary and proactive initiatives.

A vacuum occurs when we're unwilling to acknowledge we have blind spots, and that we don't need personal improvement. Excessively egocentric people tend to fall into this trap.

I believe I've reviewed at least 50 list of desirable characteristics of leaders. My nature requires me to point out that probably 90 percent of the lists include 10 points. It's also interesting to note the conflicting opinions of the different authors.

With such diverse and conflicting lists, it's hard to be dogmatic when discussing leadership. The absolutes are based on culture, personal experience and organizational requirements. Notwithstanding this caveat, it's healthy to acknowledge that all leaders have blind spots.

But we can do something about it. We start by "knowing ourselves." Then there needs to be an openness to creatively working on areas needing improvement. Then we need to be reminded of what a man said to me recently: "God has to work with crooked sticks." Our personal acknowledgment of areas of weakness give justification for leadership teams where members complement each other.

Let's review how we can handle the blind spots in our leadership.

## **Facing Blind Spots Head On!**

### **1. Acknowledge Them**

Our leadership eyesight is not going to improve unless we're willing to acknowledge the need -- and potential -- for improvement. This comes through self-examination and awareness. By discussing the issue with others, we tend to seal the commitment to improve.



## 2. **Develop a Discovery Process**

We must discover areas of needed growth. Again, this requires introspection, and a will to act. We also can find blind spots in our leadership style by aggressively seeking input from trusted associates. If we don't follow through on their input, it will show that we aren't committed to their ideas.

## 3. **Don't Let Blind Spots Rob You**

The Chinese philosopher, Laotse, said in the 6th Century B.C.: "He who conquers others is strong; he who conquers himself is mighty." Conquering our personal blind spots helps us become mightier leaders. If not confronted, our blind spots will rob us of the ability to perform at our personal best.

## 4. **Plan to Add Light on the Issue**

We don't want to become defensive in dealing with blind spots. We want to make improvement a conscious act. In his book, "Spirit Controlled Temperament," Tim LeHaye wrote that we ought to recognize our strengths and use them to build our effectiveness.

We then should acknowledge our weaknesses and develop a plan of action to overcome them to reach our potential, LeHaye wrote.

## 5. **Commit To Continuous Learning**

I have observed hundreds of people within Baylor who committed to constant learning. Through that, they will clear up blind spots in their lives. To validate our "Continuous Quality Improvement" initiative as an organization requires a commitment on the part of Baylor employees to continuous personal learning.

## 6. **Recognize the Rewards**

We've all heard the exciting stories about people who regained their sight. It's a new world for them! It will be a new world for us, individually and corporately, as we seek to eliminate our leadership blind spots.

Then, we can focus much more effectively. . . . on a beautiful future.