Six deadly blindfolds

Overcoming organizational vision loss

BY SHANE CRAGUN

As you read through this list of companies, see what comes to mind: *RadioShack, Blockbuster Video, Bethlehem Steel, Kmart, Blackberry, Atari and Tidal.*

Truthfully, some are on their way to the emergency room, others are on life support and an unfortunate few no longer exist. Why? Compelling research suggests that the number one reason organizations fail is due to an inability to adapt to an ever-changing external environment.

Outpace the Rate of Change

The likelihood that your organization will survive and produce results is directly tied to your ability to outpace external changes. This requires you to identify important shifts in your business environment and respond proactively.

Individuals and organizations that hope to prosper in the future must learn to pivot quickly, profoundly and effectively. It's no longer enough to change only as a last resort. Leaders must change *before* they have to and handle these changes with intelligence, agility, strength and command. When they do, leaders and organizations can actually accelerate performance. When they don't, they will no doubt begin down the path of irrelevance that ultimately leads to failure.

Self-Imposed Blindness

The root cause behind business failure is what we call organizational vision loss or blindness. Organizations and the executives that lead them seemingly become blind over time to the powerful external realities that shape their world.

We've identified six metaphorical and self-imposed blindfolds that can lead to failure. As a leader, how are you doing in ensuring these blindfolds are removed when recognized or avoided in the first place?

1. **Ignoring negative feedback:** The inability to hear anything negative about a project, the company or yourself.

2. **Dismissing a competitor's successes:** Refusing to accept a competitor's success as valid, and downplaying a competitor's strategy and product innovations.

3. **Staying out of touch:** A lack of empathy for your customers' needs and unwillingness to act in their best interests.

4. **Believing problems don't exist:** Ignoring organizational and individual problems, and dismissing them to protect oneself and the company.

5. **Avoiding the unavoidable:** Seeing the writing on the wall, but assuming it will go away miraculously.

6. **Displaying arrogance:** An attitude of superiority, self-importance and false pride.

Quickly Adapt or Perish

Companies who consistently generate remarkable results and create sustainable competitive advantages will be those that succeed in the 21st century. However, savvy leaders will need to align themselves to two powerful principles constantly in play:

To win today, individuals and organizations must be able to change faster and more dynamically than the speed and magnitude of external change.

To win tomorrow, individuals and organizations must create the capacity for internal change faster than the rate of external change projected.

It's vital for leaders to understand that success requires significant shifts in worldviews, approaches, skills and behaviors. The Six Deadly Blindfolds provide a useful framework that savvy executives tap into as they try to help their teams and organizations stay ahead of change and win in today's ultra competitive environment. ✪

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