



Coverdale



Ways out of the tunnel

Setting limits, gaining distance and shifting perspectives – according to our survey, these are the key skills with which can escape the trap of tunnel vision.

It should be obvious to anyone that these skills cannot be acquired through another seminar in which people learn how to work more systematically, efficiently and in a more structured and focused manner. That requires new approaches and can probably be accomplished only by breaking away from accustomed patterns.

In the following sections we have compiled a number of recommendations for ways to break away from such patterns, which we present separately for individuals, teams and organizations.

Individuals

- In the event that such symptoms as inability to power down, persistent stress, irritability or avoidance of contact appear, we recommend taking them seriously and, if possible, articulating them, preferably in protected settings, such as coaching sessions or discussions with friends.
- Review your goals: Has anything changed? Are they still in line with the superordinate goal? Are your priorities still valid?
- Look for people who regularly draw you away from everyday concerns and ask them for feedback.
- Change the context so that you can shift your perspective and take a new look at the current situation.
- Let yourself be encouraged to shift perspectives at work as well by symbols/anchors that represent the interests of stakeholders, such as customers, management and teams.
- Plan breaks and adhere to them: Drink your tea!
- Establish transitions between different duties and meetings in order to ensure that you recover your balance before moving on to the next matter.
- Have yourself supervised on a regular basis.

What we like to call a "personal pit stop" during which to pose questions for yourself can be helpful in this context:

- Have taken a look at the situation from a certain distance in order to recognize where the stress I perceive comes from?
 - ___ What is happening at the moment?
 - ___ What would be a suitable mode of action for this task/phase?
 - ___ How can I put myself in this mode?
- Is there anyone who can support me in this matter?
- Am I still working towards the right objectives?
- Are there any other, easier approaches/solutions?
- Assuming a neutral party/one of my stakeholders/an outside consultant were to observe me, what would he notice in particular and what would he do differently?

Team

The following recommendations apply to managers, team leaders and team members alike!

- Institutionalize regular reviews, plan them make time for them and avoid sacrificing them to time pressure! Deliberately demonstrate the discipline it takes to make them a component of "healthy" teamwork.
- Consider new perspectives, e.g. those of customers, management or other key stakeholders. What would an outsider say about the present situation?
- Conduct team supervision sessions at regular intervals.
- Review goals on a regular basis, focusing not only on the final outcome but also on the purposes, customers, individuals and criteria involved.
- Visualize goals for the purpose of developing a shared point of view and a common understanding of the team's goals.
- Reach an agreement on the application of a common approach.
- Bring each phase to a close before initiating the next one.

Organizations

- Develop a review-based culture. And consider the following question: To what extent have you made use of other perspectives and possibilities in the process of realizing the task or project in question?
- Involve in-house moderators and trainers in order to create more space for the process as a whole.
- Create spaces that are favorable to a change of patterns.
 - ___ Form small insular groups in the expansive cafeteria to replace the usual setting characterized by long tables and disorder.
 - ___ Provide for small measures that will help people take their minds off their work, such as "football" tables, boxing bags and gloves, games of skill, etc.
 - ___ Make an outdoor setting available where employees can go outside during breaks, sit down on benches, and take their mind off their work for brief periods of time.
- Pay attention to the matter of breaks. Ensure that breaks are taken.
 - ___ Enable employees to meet for lunch with colleagues from different departments.
 - ___ Provide free meals.
 - ___ Provide free sports programs.
- Assign managers and employees to learning journeys (e.g. Innovation Champions) that enable them to learn through impulses from outside of the organization.
- Involve HR more closely, e.g. by developing an early warning system in order to develop a sense of the condition of the organism of the organization.
- Monitor the goal hierarchy in its full complexity at regular intervals.
- Review priorities on a regular basis in order to ensure that capacity bottleneck do not become the norm. In some cases that requires the courage to cancel projects or develop additional resources.
- Conduct audits to verify the quality of teamwork
 - ___ Clarity of goals
 - ___ Shift of perspectives
 - ___ Reviews
 - ___ Learning from experience
 - ___ Interdepartmental cooperation

**The following fundamental principle applies:
"Management must lead with the best example."**

Another helpful tool is the buddy system

Today, young employees and managers who are about to move up to a higher level or switch to a different department are ordinarily assigned a mentor for the purpose of facilitating their integration into their new situations. Once that goal has been achieved, however, most organizations fail to provide follow-up support. A buddy system could help fill this gap. When managers from different departments and sections get together, the different backgrounds involved facilitate a more effective shift of perspectives.

The opportunity to question each other, to benefit from the experience of others and thus to be available to each other as resources clearly creates added value for both the individual and the organization as a whole.

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