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Coverdale **Theme**Booklet

Theme Booklet 2
Tunnel Vision

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and:
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Photo right:
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brand eins Thema B 2014 BESTE BERATER
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According to the results of a survey conducted by the business magazine brand eins, Coverdale is one of the best consulting firms in Germany in the Management, Organization and Personnel category.

Don't let tunnel vision leave you out in the cold!

Having worked with managers, teams and organizations for many years, we have witnessed the effects of major changes in the business world, increasing internationalization, complexity and accelerated development on business enterprises and the people who work for them. We have observed that many managers and line employees develop a kind of "tunnel vision" that compels them to work harder and faster, yet often less effectively. Though rarely the result of a conscious choice, this frequently has a negative impact on their creativity and innovative drive.

We wanted to take a closer look at this phenomenon.

We surveyed over 150 managers and experts in the fields of human resources and personal and organizational development on their thoughts about tunnel vision and their experience with the phenomenon. Their answers revealed a rather clear consensus: high rpms, low horsepower and considerable wear and tear.

In keeping with the engine metaphor, we make a pit stop with this booklet and take time to consider the subject from a number of different perspectives.

We then present the results of our investigation of the phenomena associated with tunnel vision, its causes and effects and the strategies employed in dealing with it.

And we've compiled a number of recommendations as practical aids to orientation based on our consulting experience.

Yet we want to avoid a one-sided approach to tunnel vision in this booklet, as it can actually be quite useful in certain contexts. When athletes plan their upcoming seasons and focuses their training on the most important competition, tunnel vision can help them concentrate on their goal. And the surgeon who needs total concentration during operations on exposed spinal cords speaks of tunnel vision when the entire operating room holds its breath at the crucial moment. And last but not least, we learn from pilots that tunnel vision can be terribly dangerous under the influence of rapidly rising G-forces. But it's also about wrong decisions people can make when they fail to consider all of the possible alternatives.

The most important thing is to know which tunnel we're entering and what options for action we have in a given situation.

“One must look into the darkness as if into a tunnel.”

Franz Kafka

"People think focus means saying yes to the things you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to hundred other good ideas that there are. I'm actually as proud of the things we haven't done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things."

Steve Jobs, founder of Apple

“From the inside, a hamster wheel looks like a career ladder.”

from the Web

When some people see light at the end of a tunnel, they just buy a new stretch of tunnel.

Johannes Rau, German Federal President

The pessimist sees only darkness in a tunnel. The optimist sees a light at the end of the tunnel.
The realist sees that the light is coming from an oncoming trai
The engine driver sees three idiots standing on the tracks.

Anonymous

"Unfortunately, the light at the end of the tunnel had to be put out due to the economic crisis."

(England during the economic crisis of the 1980s)

People who drive through a long tunnel in the Alps can be certain that a monster like this was there ahead of them: Tunnel drilling machines are 10 or 15 meters high and up to 250 meters long.

Other fascinating photos are posted here: www.herrenknecht.com/de/medien/pressebilder.html

Looking at and into the tunnel

The word, the history and lots of other facts about tunnels

According to the German Duden dictionary, "der Tunnel" is masculine, but "das Tunell" (with emphasis on the second syllable) is a common variation heard in southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The word has French roots. It originally stood for a large barrel that held 1,000 liters, from which the word "ton" (1,000 kg) was derived in turn. A tonnelle is somewhat smaller and is translated as "bower," although it doesn't mean a garden hut, but rather a flower-covered garden arch that is usually made of wire or wood, and thus refers to something light and delicate.

Regardless of its linguistic derivation, a tunnel is a structure that overcomes obstacles (or undercuts them, to be more precise): mountains like the Alps (e.g. the Gotthard Tunnel) or bodies of water (such as the River Elbe or the English Channel). Thus a tunnel establishes links or connections, opens a door to other worlds, and passes around or under barriers. Especially in the Alps, tunnels are symbols of transition to a different world. Travelers who enter the Gotthard Tunnel near Göschenen during a "typically heavy" Swiss rainstorm exit the tunnel in bright sunshine in Airolo in Tessin. Until 1980, the only choice for such travelers was between loading their cars on a train or driving the long route over the Gotthard Pass, the divide between the Rhine and Po Rivers at an elevation of 2,100 meters.

Thus the tunnel not only enables vacationers to reach their destinations faster, it also connects Switzerland and Italy, northern and southern Europe. In other words, tunnels are more than just scary, black holes; they create simple and elegant links between cultures that would otherwise be separated (at least in the winter, when the pass is closed). Cynics claim that that was the real reason why the Channel Tunnel between England and the European continent, which was originally planned in 1802, was not completed until 1993.

The first predecessors of the traffic tunnel were the underground irrigation and drainage adits that connected various oriental cities through so-called qanats with the groundwater aquifer early in the first millennium BC. The Caananites dug a 70-meter-long adit in the rock in Megiddo which gave them covered access to an underground water basin outside the walls of the city. And the Greeks built the 1,063-meter-long Eupalinos Tunnel on the island of Samos as a covered water supply in circa 530 BC. The oldest early medieval water tunnel in Central Europe is the arm of the Alm Canal in Salzburg, which supplied the city with water and was dug through the Mönchsberg in 1143.

Following the dawn of the modern period, black powder and explosives technology expanded the range of possibilities in Europe.

In the seventeenth century it also became possible to build tunnels in the course of canal construction (as in the case of the 157-meter-long Malpas Tunnel for the Canal du Midi circa 1680 and the shipping tunnel at Weilburg an der Lahn. The first tunnel (length: 64 meters) designed for both personal and commercial traffic on an alpine road was the Unerloch near Andermatt, built in 1708. Finished in 1765, the Sigmundstor in Salzburg (length: 131 meters) is the oldest road tunnel in Austria. The Sapperton Canal Tunnel in the Thames & Severn Canal opened in England

in 1789 was 3.5 km long and designed to accommodate coal barges.

George Stephenson built the first railroad tunnels along the Liverpool-Manchester line between 1826 and 1830. The invention of dynamite and rock-drilling machines powered by compressed air facilitated the construction of the major mountain tunnels. Thus the first road tunnel beneath an alpine pass was drilled under the Col de Tende in 1882. With a length of 3,182 meters, it was one of the longest tunnels approved for public use in the world at the time. Opened in 2016, the Gotthard Base Tunnel in central Switzerland is the world's longest tunnel, measuring 54 kilometers. Such long tunnels posed a major challenge in terms of safety, as they usually have no natural ventilation. Having suffered severe fires in 1999, the tunnels under Mont Blanc and the Tauern Tunnel set new standards for tunnel safety in the ensuring years.

Nearly all such long tunnels are built in accordance with the "New Austrian tunneling method (NATM)" today. In most cases, full-face machines are used to excavate the tunnels. But what is really new about the method is the method employed to control rock pressure. Years ago, arches or other structures were used to support the overlying rock loads. The new method uses the rock itself as a weight-bearing component. To that end, the rock is stabilized with anchors and injections as well as shotcrete in order to create a strong bond between the tunnel shell and the rock without hollow spaces. In terms of statics, the tunnel looks like a pipe that is formed by the rock support ring and the shoring. This method is faster and less expensive than the old one.

As a rule, the tunnel is drilled from two sides, and surveying naturally plays an important role. The constant gradient of a long tunnel no longer lies on a straight line, but instead on circles with the midpoint of the Earth and the midpoint of the circles due to the curved surface of the Earth. The light used in surveying the tunnel axis spreads in a straight line, however. Failure to take this into account results in elevation errors – theoretically roughly eight meters for every ten kilometers of length. In practice, however, tunnel engineers deal quite effectively with this phenomenon. The horizontal and vertical deviations between the two tubes of the 50-kilometer-long tunnel under the English Channel Tunnel amounted to only 35 and 6 cm, respectively, at the breakthrough point. Planning calculations specified a maximum deviation of 250 cm.

Tunnels have also written political and military history. In the 1960s, both secret escape tunnels leading from East Berlin and the GDR and spy tunnels leading in the opposite direction were built during the era of the Berlin Wall. During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong maintained numerous tunnels leading to points near the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon in the 1970s. These tunnels served as hiding places for soldiers of the People's Army of Vietnam during bombing attacks and patrols, as supply routes and as field hospitals for North Vietnamese troops. During the war in Bosnia in the 1990s, Bosnian troops built a secret tunnel from Sarajevo through which they received badly needed supplies. And tunnels in the Gaza Strip in the Middle East were recently the targets of an attack by the Israeli Army, as they were suspected of being used to smuggle weapons and rockets by the Palestinians.

Blackouts, red-outs and human factors

How (glider) pilots struggle with tunnel vision

Luc De Causmaecker is a glider pilot, a flight instructor at the Wasserkuppe station and a human resources consultant in Frankfurt. We spoke with him about the two types of tunnel vision experienced by pilots – the purely physiological kind and the type that relates to the human factors involved in decision-making.

? How would you describe the effects of tunnel vision on a glider pilot?
:: In winch launches, gliders are virtually catapulted into the sky on roughly 1,000-meter-long cables. After an airstrip flight controller clears the glider for takeoff by issuing the "cable taut" command, the glider accelerates from zero to one hundred km/h in less than four seconds. At this point the pilot experiences a form of tunnel vision for physiological reasons alone. The glider accelerates in a steep climb toward the heavens. The pilot's body is pressed into the seat, and he no longer sees anything on his right or left. The rate of acceleration diminishes gradually after a few seconds, and the pilot has an increasingly wider field of view. He adjusts the angle of the wing tips, and the tow cable is released a bit later. The pilot then goes on course and looks for thermal updrafts.

? So what physical processes give rise to tunnel vision?
:: There are several possible physiological causes! Tunnel vision can be triggered by a shortage of oxygen in the blood, for example – that is, when the saturation level of red blood cells decreases from the normal 98 percent to below a certain limit, which differs for every individual. This phenomenon can be simulated under controlled, monitored conditions in an altitude chamber. Thus respiratory support in the form of an oxygen mask is absolutely necessary for survival in a glider flying at high altitude, as gliders are not pressurized like airliners. Another cause of tunnel vision that is familiar to jet pilots, in particular, is the influence of high G-forces. In sharp curves or loops, the gravitational pull may be up to nine times stronger than normal. In such cases the pilot's blood is forced into his legs and torso, and his brain is undersupplied. The first sign of a problem is a "grey-out," in which color perception diminishes. This is accompanied by tunnel vision, in which peripheral vision is restricted on both sides, and eventually ends in blackout. Pilots learn to tense the muscles in their abdomen, buttocks and thighs and hold their breath in order to counteract this effect. But when that no longer helps, G-LOC occurs (G-force-induced loss of consciousness). That is why jet pilots wear special flight suits that compress the legs like a kind of super-support stocking in order to minimize the space into which blood can flow into the legs. Stunt pilots, who are exposed to similar acceleration forces in their aircraft, experience that as well. They actually train specifically on making all motion sequences at the rudder so automatic that a brief fainting spell or blackout will not necessarily disrupt the choreo-

graphy of the performance. ... And by the way, the opposite of a blackout, namely a red-out, can occur as well. When you fly a parabolic flight path, the opposite physical effect takes place. Blood is pressed upward into the eyes, and you literally see red. Capillaries in the eyes burst, and you feel as if your eyes were popping out of your head because the cranium doesn't give way, and the eyes start to work like a pressure-relief valve. It's not a pleasant feeling, and the burst capillaries in the eyes of stunt pilots are a clear sign that they approach this limit again and again.

? Are such cases of tunnel vision common?
:: No, pilots will not willingly submit to physiologically induced impairments. Yet a search for "flight training tunnel vision" in Google or at the website of a private aircraft owner is likely to turn up quite a few hits. Most reports about tunnel vision have less to do with physiological processes than with stress-related causes. . It's important to realize that 80 percent of all flight accidents are caused by "wrong" decisions and so-called "human factors." The statistics on accidents resulting from human factors reveal only very few cases in which genuine physical deficiencies were at work, but many in which psychological aspects played a dominant role. These influences are reinforced by such factors as fatigue, the threat of bad weather, a lack of routine or a certain "this-is-nothing-I-can't-handle" attitude.

? Has anything like that ever happened to you?
:: Yes. I think every pilot has experienced situations that might easily have gone horribly wrong. I once took off from the Wasserkuppe in the Rhön region with a plan to complete a 300-kilometer triangular flight. The weather was fine, but the flight took much longer than anticipated, and after eight hours in the air I was definitely no longer in the best shape. With twenty kilometers to go before I could land on the Wasserkuppe I still had 700 meters of altitude for my approach – a kind of altitude reserve between me and the airfield. That was – as I was well aware at the time – cutting it awfully close. It might go well, or it might not. That was one of those tunnel vision situations. I kept flying; I wanted to get home. I had several alternatives. I could have reached several other airfields safely, and under the circumstances, I should have headed for one of them right away. I could also have looked for a new updraft over one of the alternative airfields and given myself a sufficient reserve for the flight home. If I hadn't found an updraft, I could have landed safely at another airfield at any time. I didn't consider these safer alter-

Luc De Causmaecker (*1949) studied electrical engineering and worked as an engineer, product manager and sales representatives for a high-tech medical corporation for 15 years. He then served as sales manager and managing director for a major mid-sized firm in the mechanical engineering industry. After that, he moved on to assume responsibility for the international business operations of a leading pharmaceutical and medical technology company. He is now the owner of the De Causmaecker & Partner personnel consulting firm in Frankfurt. He has specialized primarily in the fields of industry, medicine and scientific research. www.houseofconsultants.de

[The photo on p. 8 and the pilot's portrait below were taken at the glider flight school on the Wasserkuppe in the Rhön region.]

natives and instead flew directly to the runway on the peak of the Wasserkuppe. When I saw it, I was still convinced that I could make a good landing there. But – and there is always a BUT – the devil lies in the details. As I approached the peak, the wind pressed me downward. My altitude quickly diminished and was no longer sufficient for a clean landing. So I shot with the glider towards a steeply sloping meadow at over 100 km/h. Well, gliders are lightweight aircraft by nature, and it's kind of like sitting in a yogurt cup with wings.

A big rock on the meadow would have put an end to me, but there was no rock, and I managed to land safely going uphill. One wing came gently to rest perpendicular to the slope, and all was well. That was piloting skill, but there was a whole lot of luck involved as well! Several poor decisions triggered by fatigue, my desire to reach my destination via the fastest route and my failure to consider other safe alternatives led to a classic case of tunnel vision.
We pilots have a picture we refer to as the cheese analogy: ten slices of Swiss cheese are full of holes, as everyone knows. An accident happens when the slices arrange themselves in such a way that you can see through them all because the holes are perfectly aligned. In other words, many different factors must come together to cause an accident. In most cases, the chain is broken at some point.

? Can that be applied to the occupational context?
Yes, quite easily, I think. We are all confronted with pressure quite often: unachievable goals, a boss who looks only at the numbers, major investments that have to pay off and then perhaps a beloved competitor who generates unrest in the market.

Tunnel vision

Results of the Coverdale manager survey

The method:
Between February and April 2014, Coverdale interviewed some 160 managers and experts in the fields of human resources, personnel development and organizational development by telephone on the basis of a prepared questionnaire. Thus although the survey is not truly representative, it does allow us to draw a number of conclusions and develop possible new approaches. Further information about the method, the composition of the sample and the results is provided at www.coverdale.de

The results:
Part of the survey is devoted to a study and description of the phenomena associated with tunnel vision. "How does the onset of tunnel vision feel?" Those surveyed cited the following as signs of tunnel vision in themselves or others most often:
- working without pause,
- failure to take note of the surrounding environment,
- trying to ignore as much as possible.

Other reaction patterns include aggressive behavior and attempts to mobilize all available forces. Yet that can quickly turn into a loss of energy and demotivation. Those surveyed can no longer see themselves; they feel controlled entirely by external stimuli and succumb to a victim mentality.

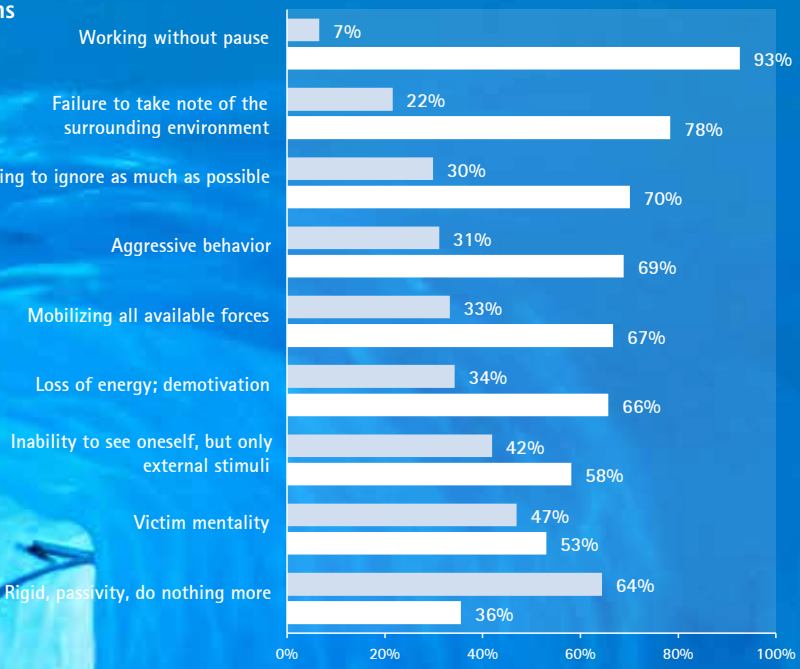
In addition to the phenomena related to the personal level, we also wanted to learn what participants in the survey had to say about the effects of tunnel vision at the level of the organization.

How does tunnel vision impact on leadership, teamwork and the performance quality?
More than half of those surveyed cited weakening leadership during periods marked by tunnel vision. They complained either of a perceived lack of leadership or the exercise of leadership from a distance. One third of those surveyed said that leadership works only by "directive," that managers pass on their own pressure directly to others and that a performance culture is needed.

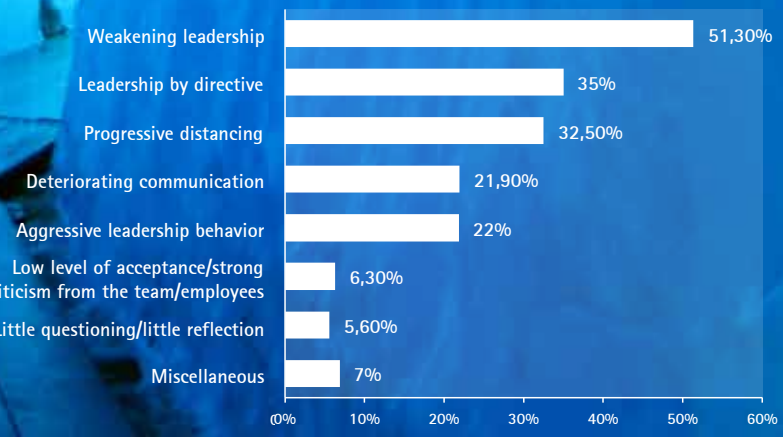
In addition to leadership, those surveyed feel that teamwork also suffers. Roughly two-thirds of all participants see tunnel vision as the cause of poor teamwork (isolation, diminishing reliability). One-third make tunnel vision responsible for tension and reduced identification with objectives or for increasing conflict behavior to the point at which team members begin to work against each other.

The survey cited another phenomenon related to tunnel vision at the organizational level: increasingly poor performance. Over one-third stated that performance quality suffers under the influence of tunnel vision. Short-term gains in quantity are achieved at the price of long-term losses of quality. Errors become more and more fre-

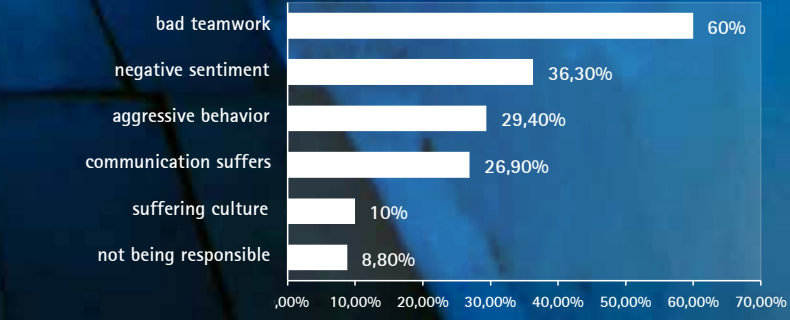
Reaction patterns



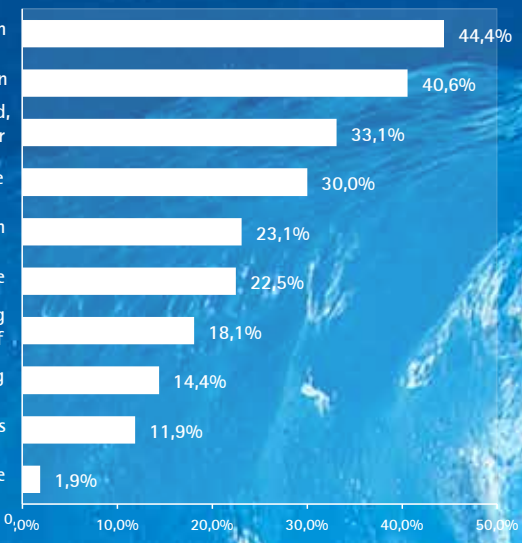
Leadership



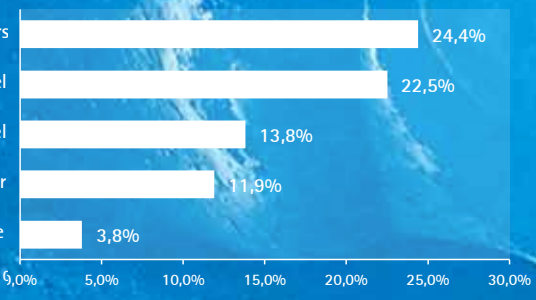
Culture



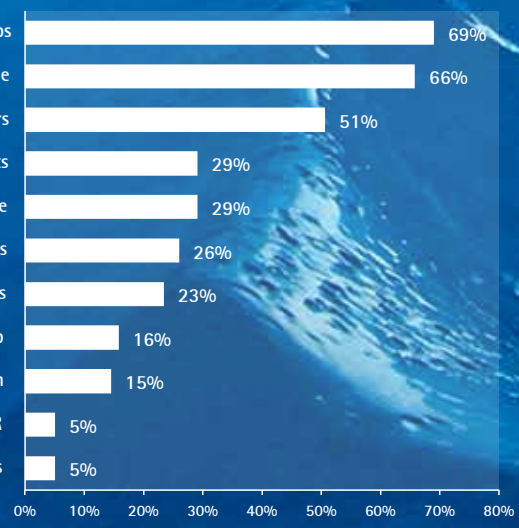
Methods of preventing entry into the tunnel



Ways of recognizing the tunnel



Resources



quent; effectiveness diminishes and people lose sight of higher goals.

Asked about other effects of tunnel vision, 15 percent of those surveyed cited the concrete risk of burnout and 11 percent the possibility of at least inner, but often open resignation, increasingly frequent absence due to illness and the lack of ability or willingness to learn as negative effects of tunnel vision.

Asked about possible benefits, 40 percent cited an advantage in the form of short-term efficiency gains and the sharpened focus that goes with it. 26 percent saw no benefits and 21 percent stated that it boosts pride and solidarity when a team has passed through this phase.

The causes of tunnel vision

We asked participants in the study about the presumed causes of tunnel vision. Because we allowed them to cite multiple causes, the resulting picture is quite interesting. Nearly the same number of participants (namely about 60 percent each) see structural factors and aspects of personality as equally important causes.

Parity of objective and subjective causes

We took a closer look at this point and followed up with more questions. Only 24 percent recognize insufficient working methodology, e.g. little experience, poor work structuring or insufficient distance from work as causes. A much larger number of participants see the cause of tunnel vision as rooted in personality – and thus in an area that is known to be difficult to influence. Perfectionism, ambition, fear of failure, attempts to please everyone, a lack of honesty, and one's general personal disposition are the specific keywords used in reference to this class of causes.

Yet the causes of tunnel vision are by no means regarded as rooted exclusively in of some sort of "deficient personal disposition." A number of causes can also be traced to the level of the organization:

Resource shortages, deadline pressure, globalization, increasing speed, the influence of new media and poorly defined structures and processes are the most significant driving forces.

If tunnel vision really has such negative effects, how can I recognize and prevent it?

It comes as no big surprise that participants consider it rather unlikely that individuals could change the causal factors associated with the corporate culture and the competitive environment – and that they tend to see early warning systems and escape routes as personal options.

Roughly twice as many mentions of mental/emotional early warning signals than physical ones are clear indications of the difficulty of grasping these phenomena and the extent to which those affected must rely on precise self-perception and reflection. These are the three most frequently cited early warning signals at the personal level. Further details are provided at www.coverdale.de/node/664

Preventing tunnel vision – but how?

We asked the participating managers about the methods they have learned as means of preventing the onset of tunnel vision, or the process of entering the tunnel. Those in the largest group (44 percent) regard communication as the best reme-

dy: addressing the situation, exchanging views, requesting feedback and then responding to it. Self-perception ranked second (40 percent), and goal-oriented behavior/a structured working approach placed third at 33 percent. Interaction with others and self-reflection have clearly proven effective once the tunnel has attracted notice. "Setting boundaries"and "gaining distance" were the most frequently cited strategies, at 27 and 26 percent, respectively.

Last but not least, we asked about sources of support for efforts to deal with tunnel vision. And the "originator principle" played no role at all in the responses. The HR Department (5 percent), the company (15 percent) and supervisors (23 percent) placed far behind others (26 percent). Instead, Participants named their families, partners and stable relationships as the most helpful sources of support (69 percent), followed closely by other motivated individuals from the private circle of friends and acquaintances.

Summary of the findings of the Tunnel Vision Study:

- *Working without pause and isolation are the most often cited phenomena.*
- *Resource shortages and the individual's personality are the most important causal factors.*
- *Deficient leadership, poor teamwork and poor performance are the consequences.*
- *Self-perception, addressing the situation and goal verification have a preventive effect.*
- *Once an individual has entered the tunnel, boundaries, distance and balance serve as exit strategies. Keyword: Self-management*
- *Source of support include families and personal friends/acquaintances from outside of the organization (excluding supervisors, colleagues and the HR Department).*

Strategies and tools

... derived on the basis of the Tunnel Vision Study

In addition to the problems associated with the diagnosis of "tunnel vision" for individuals and their organizations, the analysis of our survey also reveals possible counterstrategies and ways out of the dilemma. We take a closer look at the relevant options in this section.

We were all impressed by one statistic from our survey: 93 percent of those surveyed described "working without pause" as a symptom of tunnel vision. We wouldn't have expected such a clear consensus. And this issue is addressed in the article by Andreas Schattschneider. He describes the rhythm comprising periods of maximum stress and recovery phases. Managers must realize that even the best employees (and they, too) eventually „run out of gas" under exposure to constant pressure and stress.

Another point emphasized in the survey, which we would also like to address in this context, is the goal assessment process as a potential approach to preventing tunnel vision and escaping from the tunnel. The article by Brigitte SchröderZavala describes the concrete process of carrying out such a goal assessment. It involves more than simply monitoring results. The „target," one of the fundamental tools Coverdale has developed, has proven highly effective in this context.

And in our increasingly complex world it is also important to keep an eye on the great whole. Self-perception and self-management – that is, the ability to set boundaries, gain distance and shift perspectives – were cited as the best ways to escape the tunnel mode. We then pick up that thread with some ideas developed by Henning von Bismarck about how self-perception and self-reflection can be enhanced or strengthened.

Development requires rhythm and stability

by Andreas Schattschneider

93 percent of those surveyed in Coverdale's Tunnel Vision Study described "working without pause" as a typical reaction pattern. It becomes unhealthy for the individual and the system as a whole when such behavior is maintained over an extended period of time or is even accepted as customary and a natural part of the corporate culture.

As social systems, business organizations are subject to the same requirements for development as other living systems. The growth and development of organisms proceed in spurts. Phases of slower and more rapid progress alternate with periods of stabilization and regenerative growth pauses. Eliminating these pauses produces stress, which may in turn lead to massive disruptions of the development process and even to paralysis. We are more clearly aware of these phenomena in other areas.

Experience with systematic, goal-oriented training programs for athletes indicates that constant, intensive training does not result in better performance. Phases of less intensive endurance training should alternate with challenging high-performance phases and relaxing regeneration phases.

Similar observations have been made in learning situations. The human being evidently needs a rhythm consisting of periods of activity, rest and reflection in order to develop efficiently and reach optimum performance capacity.

Business organizations need challenging growth and development spurts as well as periods of high performance, as living systems need incentives to grow and develop. Only in that way can a system's capacity for change ensure its survival.

Avoiding such situations leads to a state of system torpor. Thus it is essential to find a healthy rhythm consisting of periods of rapid progress in alternation with phases of regeneration and integration.

Demonstrate rhythm as a manager

Develop a culture of rhythmic alternation between periods of work, breaks and time-outs.

- Regard overtime as an exception so that everyone has opportunities to engage in leisure activities and cultivate their social relationships on a regular basis.
- Systematic adherence to break times is especially important during high-stress phases. When delegating tasks, ensure that your employees can introduce a measure of variety into their day-to-day routines.
- Encourage little rituals that allow people to escape temporarily from their work and focus on something else. Bring things to a close; celebrate the achievement of an objective before you immerse yourself in the next task..
- Allow for flexible work schedules – wherever possible – in order to accommodate the different rhythms of employees more effectively.
- Allow for longer time-outs, such as sabbaticals.
- Discuss the importance of rhythm with your employees.

A positive side-effect of stopping to reflect is that obstacles and limitations on the road to corporate development are recognized early on and taken into account.

The goal is more than just an outcome

by Brigitte Schröder-Zavala

The method of management by objectives, or MBO, originated with Peter Drucker, who developed the concept in the 1950s. Objectives should be "smart": specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and achievable within a defined time frame. We view the outcome in the future as if with a telescope; the criteria for achievement are clearly outlined. As our founder Ralph Coverdale explained in the 1960s, it is the meaning and purpose of every activity that count and represent essential components of the definition of an objective: why and for whom do we do what we regard as our job?

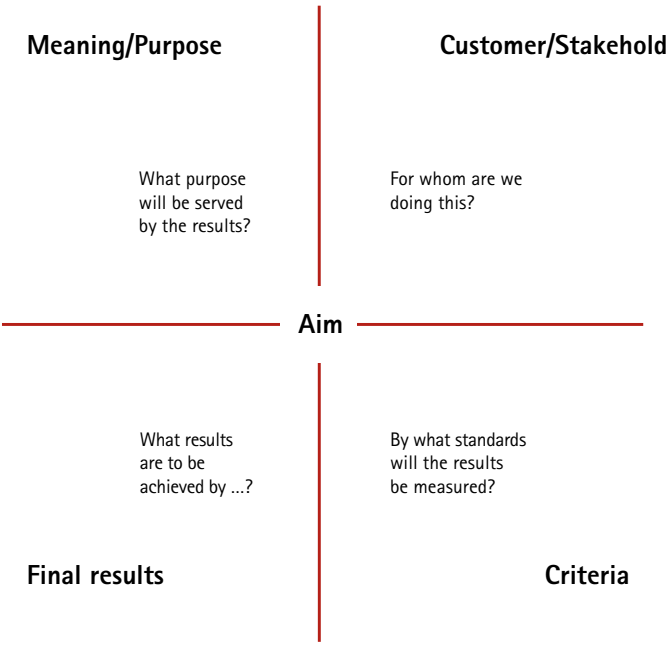
With regard to SMART objectives, the term "realistic" has since gradually given way to "relevant". When the subject of customer orientation, including all of the facets of internal customer and stakeholder relationships, drew more and more attention in the 1980s, we outlined the "for whom" aspect as a distinct complex of issues within the goal-definition process and developed the target with its four quadrants as a means of visualizing purposes, customers, results and criteria.

An objective is meaningful if the results actually fulfill the purpose and the needs of the customer as well as certain specified requirements and criteria.

It is also important to check repeatedly to ensure that you are heading in the right direction. Have business conditions or expectations changed in the meantime? Can your chosen objective be achieved in the desired quality under the current conditions? Is the objective even still meaningful? And where do your priorities lie? In the "tunnel mode," the focus appears to be limited to the objective in the sense of a result: "What am I expected to deliver?" or "What must my department deliver by a certain point in time?"

Costs (in terms of time, effort and money) and benefits are no longer evaluated. Deliberately selected priorities are replaced by quick decisions and correspondingly rapid implementation. That leads to dissatisfaction with the results, because different perspectives have been ignored or alternatives have not been considered. The results are of poor quality because too much emphasis was placed on getting the job done as soon as possible. People lose sight of the common goals of a business enterprise or larger organizational unit. There are no coordinated solutions. High consequential costs are incurred due to the lack of coordination. The time and effort required to revise results are exorbitant.

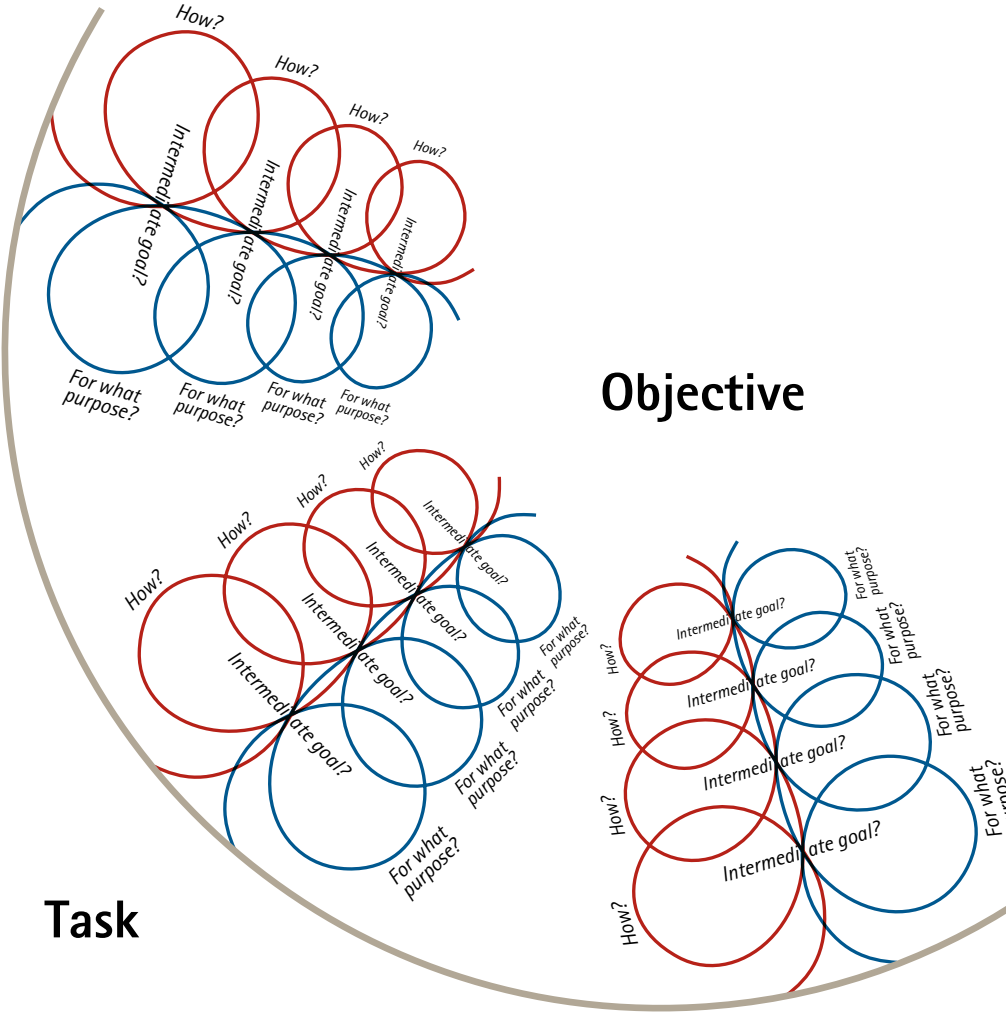
Ill. Target (Coverdale)



Focusing on the Great Whole: The "how-and why network"

In a world dominated by complex hierarchies, objectives are broken down into a coherent system of parallel and subordinate (intermediate) goals. Choices are made continually between various options in the process of operationalizing superordinate purposes. People can only do their jobs properly and with commitment as long as they remain aware of the superordinate objectives. In our view, every individual is responsible for verifying the meaning and purpose of the objectives to which he or she is committed. The keyword here is entrepreneurial thinking. Some might argue that there is no need to verify objectives from "below," since they have already been determined logically "from above."

However, not all business organizations are hierarchically structured today. In order to ensure that an organization can react more quickly to customers' needs and market opportunities, tasks and objectives are defined at various different points within the system, and not solely through cascading goal agreements. In this context, a view of the whole is needed at every point in the system, and responsibility for harmonizing one's own objectives with those of the organization as a whole and of neighboring units lies with the units which set their own goals. We recommend examining each objective as a node in a network of objectives.



The following Coverdale consultants served on the expert team for the Tunnel Study:

Ulrike Böhm, business correspondent; several years of international management experience; with Coverdale Deutschland since 1999: advance training in TA, potential-oriented coaching, supervision, etc.

Henning von Bismarck, business studies graduate and non-medical psychotherapist; consultant, trainer and coach at Coverdale, specialized in management, teamwork and personality development.

Susanne Jakob-Lechner, communications expert, M.A., many years of management experience; with Coverdale Deutschland since 1997; advanced training in systematic consulting and transactional analysis, etc.; EAS supervisor and coach.

Andreas Schattschneider, business studies graduate; many years of management experience in marketing and sales; with Coverdale Deutschland since 1999; advanced training in coaching EI, and organizational alignment, etc.

Brigitte Schröder-Zavala, Social education graduate; management experience in the field of social welfare; consultant/trainer at Coverdale Deutschland since 1982: advanced training in systemic therapy and consulting, etc.

Self-Perception

... as a key behavior-modification skill

by Henning von Bismarck

Self-perception, as the survey clearly indicated, plays a key role in the process of dealing with tunnel vision. It protects people from succumbing to the tunnel mode, and it helps them realize when they are already in the tunnel mode. It can also help them escape from the tunnel.

We define it as an inner-directed attentiveness that enables us to visualize our thoughts and feelings at a given moment without judging, criticizing or altering them. All of that comes later (perhaps?)!

It might also be described as a conscious pause taken while a certain pattern of experience and behavior runs its course. We view our own experience, thoughts and emotions from a helicopter perspective.

Thus this state of inner attentiveness differs fundamentally from everyday awareness and the tunnel mode, in which our attention is ordinarily focused on achieving certain results and governed by automatic behavior patterns. And it is precisely these aspects that we want to evaluate through our inner attentiveness. But that requires us to listen to our inner voice – to listen for the soft tones that often go unheard in everyday life: thoughts, images, beliefs, feelings, moods, physical tensions, flows of energy or reluctance and blockades. At first, none of these should be judged on the basis of reason and rationality, as we ordinarily tend to do. We react to situations and people intuitively before we assess them rationally. The objective is to regain access to this intuition.

Therefore, it is helpful to observe the following aspects when one is in the tunnel mode (or preferably shortly before it begins):

- How do I experience the external circumstance and other people and what behavior patterns emerge automatically?
- What early warning signals (physical, mental or emotional) that indicate a deviation from a "good working condition" do I notice?
- What is my own contribution to this condition (e.g. certain demands I make of myself or unconscious basic convictions) or to its intensification?
- Do I also perceive improvements and my own decisions or actions that have brought them about?
- It is helpful to develop a sense of one's own individual "good working condition" – ideally at the physical, emotional and rational levels.

An active decision to practice self-perception is necessary

The reason and rationalism that is quite rightly expected in occupational life often causes us to regard our own feelings, actions and beliefs as subjective and thus as unimportant. When this supposed subjectivity appears to conflict with the objective level, we tend to suppress it – especially in the tunnel mode.

"Only when I know what I'm doing can I do as I wish."

Moshe Feldenkrais

It would be important instead to begin by defining this conflict precisely. And that requires a conscious decision, and a behavior pattern must then be interrupted and examined. That requires a certain capacity to set oneself apart from the internal and external factors that make up the individual tunnel mode. The following exercise can help break through such behavior patterns.

Although exercises in attentiveness often have a relaxing effect, they are not intended primarily to promote relaxation but are meant instead to support perception one's current inner experience. Such "pauses" can make it possible to develop new perspectives and behavior patterns.

Take 3 to 10 minutes for the following exercise.

One good approach to self-perception is to begin with a breathing exercise. Observe how you breathe for a few breaths. Then pay attention to your body, observing, for example, how your body makes contact with the chair or the floor or how your body responds to your breathing.

Then register your thoughts for a while and pay attention to your feelings and/or your mood. Ideally, you should do this with a non-judgmental attitude that allows you to accept surprises.

At the end of the exercise you can compare your condition before and after the exercise.

Although exercises in attentiveness often have a relaxing effect, they are not intended primarily to promote relaxation but are meant instead to support perception one's current inner experience. Such "pauses" can make it possible to develop new perspectives and behavior patterns.

A client's view from the outside:

The relationship between leadership and tunnel vision

By Jürgen Dost
(Director Human Resources, Energizer)

We are all too familiar with "diving into the tunnel" from our own work experience. Managers develop backwards, becoming technical specialists by apparently making the solution to a current problem their own individual duty and theirs alone.

That is understandable up to a certain point: If the crisis situation affects one's own section or department, the person in charge of

that unit quite rightly believes that he or she bears the primary responsibility for solving the problem.

However, in our increasingly complex, variously interconnected world it is virtually impossible to solve complex problems alone – and the problem in question is likely to be complex, since crises are rarely triggered by routine matters. Thus in such a situation it is particularly important for the manager to rely on the competence of his/her own employees. Traditional teamwork is required, not in the sense of "cuddling up together" but of contributing individual insights and experience and making a concerted effort in the interest of the entire organizational unit. Unfortunately, the reality in this case is quite different. The manager is in "overdrive," and staff members complain that they are not sufficiently involved in the problem-solving process, that communication with their manager has broken down or that management is directive at best and there no real delegation of decision-making authority. This retreat from the problem-solving collective may also be the product of an organizational culture that values technical performance above managerial performance – which generally the rule, rather than the exception in technology firms (the best mechatronics expert becomes the head of the maintenance department). It often happens in such cases that the organization loses a good technical specialist and gains a manager who is insecure and unhappy in his/her role. In environments of this kind, it is expected of managers – or ma-

nagers expect of themselves – that they possess the highest level of know-how regarding the technical/substantive functions for which the section or department is responsible.

Faced with the need to deal with a crisis, the maintenance manager (for example) becomes a mere "wrench-turner" again – one for whom the social environment is but a bothersome secondary matter that only distracts him from his supposed primary duties.
In employee surveys conducted with a total of 608 employees in 2011 and 2013, we analyzed the correlations between managerial quality (as assessed subjectively by the respondents themselves) and commitment, work satisfaction and general physical well-being. We identified highly significant correlations (in hierarchical regression and discriminance analyses) between physical well-being and employee commitment, i.e. the willingness of employees to make efforts in excess of what is normally expected of them and to "do their best." Statistically meaningful correlations were also identified with respect to work satisfaction – as expressed in the willingness to speak favorably about the organization, to recommend it and to continue working there for many years. The feeling on the part of employees that their own input in terms of effort, know-how and work time is not fairly rewarded in the form of material and non-material benefits has a strong negative impact on their commitment, work satisfaction and physical well-being. (Although cross-sectional studies relating to causality must be interpreted with considerable caution!) Managers who remain stuck in the tunnel and neglect their managerial roles renounce all claims to immaterial gratification and admiration. They fail to attend to things, and to provide support and reinforcement. But they pass the pressure to which they are exposed on to others! For their employees that means more work for fewer benefits.

Other analyses of available data actually showed that the gratification crisis is closely linked with aspects of personnel management and is not limited to an organization's financial incentive system.

Yet another interesting finding, which we considered quite surprising, was the fact that employees tend to make blanket evaluations of their managers and do not differentiate on the basis of the customary dimensions of charisma, transformational leadership, or employee- and performance-oriented management. They simply rate their bosses as "good or "not so good" (and not as "good in terms of employee orientation and not so good in terms of performance orientation). It was also evident that the results for many managers were widely scattered, i.e. very positive ratings from some employees and rather negative ratings from others.

Although it may clash with the seemingly unintentional, "natural" reaction schemes of managers in critical situations, this is the point at which they need to mobilize their teams to solve the problem together and concentrate on managing – by describing the current challenges and the obstacles that need to be overcome, by organizing the work of the team, by engaging in intensive communication with employee and coaching them in their work on the problem, by involving other departments that can contribute to solving the problem, but also by making a conscious effort to engage the members of the "out group," whose potential has not been tapped because they tended to be "left out of the picture" in the past.

Thus, we can conclude that, when we are in danger of falling into the tunnel, it is much easier to avoid this "black hole" AS A TEAM. And the organization can help managers by permitting them to recognize and address the "tunnel" – not as a sign of weakness, but as a signal indicating that the organization needs to meet a challenge as a coherent unit. And in the ideal case, the organization will reduce the probability of that tunnel situation by planning the deadlines and resource allocations necessary to solve the problem at

Jürgen Dost, *1958, studied psychology, specializing in occupational and organizational psychology, at the Bergische Universität in Wuppertal. He has served in various managment positions in the personnel development and personnel management departments of international corporate groups and owner-managed organizations. He is currently Human Resources Director at Energizer, an American company in the consumer goods sector.

hand and taking precautions to avoid excessively stressful situations – as personal performance is limited in the tunnel, and that in turn impacts on the performance of the department and the organization as a whole.

A practical example from our business experience

In order to promote conscious, supportive management that takes advantage of the engagement of our company's employees – especially during critical phases – and in order to provide support for managers under massive pressure to perform, we are currently conducting a one-year "Leadership Development" designed to enable individuals at all levels of management – from plant managers to shop foremen – through mandatory and elective training modules to deal effectively with impending changes and challenges. In this program, the boundaries between personal and organizational development disappear, as individual learning takes place within the context of the concrete situation in which the organization is currently operating and the challenges it is presently facing. In this program, the actual situation replaces the case study! Principles of change management – to cite only one example – are learned and applied to the participants' own change situations, and the workshop character of the modules gives participants, all of whom belong to a single level of the corporate hierarchy, a chance to contribute actively to designing the change process and to consult with each other. The results of such instructional modules then flow as input into the modules for the following level, the viewpoints of which are also reflected "upward," however. This leads to an intelligent top-down and bottom-up discussion process, on the one hand, while the management levels act on the basis of familiar and agreed-upon principles – a good example of applied participation. As a result, managers who have already disappeared halfway into the tunnel, are made aware of their own situations, and they are able to engage in open and honest discussion and compare their own situations with the situations and problem-solving strategies of their colleagues. The "lone warrior fighting a losing battle" becomes part of a "concerted problem-solving effort". In instructional modules of this kind it is also possible to address the misconception that a manager is obligated to solve the problems of his section or department alone, and mutual social support among colleagues becomes a principle of good teamwork rather than a sign of personal weakness.

»Big Five«

A tool used to predict susceptibility to tunnel vision

Dr. Stephan Kolominski holds a doctoral degree in psychology and is managing partner of the PI Company. He has more than 15 years of consulting experience in the field of personnel economics and has specialized in personnel diagnostics. Andreas Schattschneider spoke with him.

? Stephan, now that you have read the "Tunnel Vision" study, what aspects did you find the most surprising or disturbing?
:: I find it astonishing that resource shortages and aspects of personality are most often cited by respondents as possible causes of "tunnel vision." Increasing "psychological" pressure on managers tasked with progressively increasing responsibility in the areas of finance and personnel management as well as the lack of adequate stress-management programs for managers are indicative of another negative trend that favors burnout among managers. The resulting negative stress (distress) leads to a vicious circle, as individuals are compelled to work harder and harder to compensate for the performance losses that naturally occur. Thus it is all the more important for organizations to train their management personnel systematically. And of course they must also analyze their personalities beforehand. Towards the end of the study I was also astonished to read that relatively little importance is attributed to organizations and HR departments as potential outside resources to be applied in solving the problem of tunnel vision. However, this simply underscores the extent to which this issue is neglected by organizations.

? Participants in the survey cited aspects of personality – such as perfectionism – as key causal factors contributing to the phenomenon of tunnel vision. You have been involved in personality research for many years. What insights and hypotheses regarding this issue have emerged from this research?
:: Research on aspects of personality during the past several decades has provided clear evidence that, in addition to traditional working conditions (structural factors), dimensions of personality are also responsible for tunnel vision – how we deal with stress (tunnel mode), for example, or with management duties. The five factors – neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness – describe human personalities and consequently also the ways in which people deal with events that impact on them. Thus specific competencies, such as tolerance for stress, goal-orientation and employee managment skills, can be identified with reference to these personality dimensions.

? Aside from your work at the university, you are also the managing partner of the PI Company, which offers a personality model (Big Five) and a corresponding diagnostic tool (Reflector Big Five). Are there parameters beyond the Big-Five model that serve as indicators of the tunnel mode in both its negative and positive senses??
:: Based on our research, we have identified several possible personality constellations that may favor

Dr. Stephan Kolominski has worked for more than 10 years as an instructor and staff member in the field of occupational and organizational psychology. He is particularly interested in the aspects of personnel selection and development. His dissertation is entitled "The Blind Spot in the Personnel Selection Process" and was published by the Dr. Kovac Verlag, Hamburg. www.picompany.de

tunnel vision. In my own view, what we traditionally regard as tunnel vision is very closely related to the burnout syndrome, which you also describe in your study. In that context, the Big-Five factor of neuroticism is a good potential predictor of the early signs of tunnel vision. But as described in the study, time pressure and management duties may also serve the same function. Numerous feedback discussions with managers have shown that the importance of this factor may be heightened by such influences as capacity overloads, deadline pressure and the lack of stress-management support from the organization.

One of the competencies comprised by our competence model is "tolerance for stress," which describes the extent to which we can continue to perform effectively as managers under the influence of time pressure, setbacks, disappointment and/or resistance. One possible "ideal constellation" would be present when a manager is not a dedicated perfectionist, rarely worries, ordinarily remains calm in critical situations, tends to see solutions rather than problems and needs only a relatively brief recovery period. These variants may explain why tunnel vision manifests itself in different forms and why it may be perceived differently.

? Teams can be also evaluated with the aid of the Reflector Big Five. What elements that could help deal more effectively with the negative effects of tunnel vision do you recognize in this context?

:: The accelerated pace of market developments cited above makes it increasingly important for organizations to form efficient and effective teams. With the aid of team evaluations based on the results of the Reflector Big Five Personality Test, it is now possible to develop an understanding of group effects. We can show the specific average values for members of a group and recognize where an entire team may be headed in terms of tunnel vision. Furthermore, members of a group may be sensitized to the issue of personality and competence as well as tunnel vision, etc. and be able to discuss existing problems together. It is particularly interesting in this context to look closely at the average values for "neuroticism" and "agreeableness," as these may serve as reliable indicators of possible conflicts within the team. I also see a close link to possible training and coaching measures, since advance team analysis can help in the process of designing more efficient training units, as the team profile may reveal underlying team and leadership structures.

? I have a personal question for you before we end our interview. How do you deal with the issue of tunnel vision yourself. Is it even an issue for you at all?
:: Dealing with stressful situations and tunnel vision is not a simple matter. Personally, I think it's important to find a way to balance work and leisure time. The term "work-life balance" fits very well here, I think. We need to plan time-outs deliberately, especially after weeks of stress and high-pressure to perform, in order to avoid ending up in a vicious circle in which performance ultimately deteriorates. I have also noticed that many colleagues are actually required to be available for contact 24 hours a day and have to answer e-mail even in the evenings or on weekends. I think that people should be able to take a step back so that they can observe and reflect on developments from the helicopter perspective once in a while. During my holidays I read an interesting book in which an author who has a unique approach to dealing with stress, competencies and personality was quoted. His motto is "never leave your circle of competence." By that he means that people should know themselves, be able to reflect on themselves and be aware of their own limits in terms of stress, pressure and other challenges. That may also be a good way of avoiding tunnel vision.

The Reflector Big Five Personality (www.picompany.de) is a scientifically sound personality test that has proven its worth over many years of practical application. The Big Five Personality Test provides precise and reliable information about occupational aspects of personality and the personal competencies of employees. The "Big Five" model has been empirically validated in a number of studies and is currently regarded as the standard psychological tool in the field of personality research.

Aquarium tunnel

The limits of perception

There is also an economic form of tunnel vision

"Homo oeconomicus" is one of the most popular models in the fields of economics and decision theory. The term referes to an individual who thinks exclusively in economic terms and makes decisions solely on the basis of rational considerations.

The fitness industry generated 4.55 billion euros in turnover in 2013. Little research has been done on the question of how many people discontinue their training but continue to pay their monthly fees anyway. Several studies suggest figures of between 25 and 50 percent. Thus we are talking about a kind of modern trade in indulgences in which people pay to maintain a clear conscience. Although I don't engage in training (the gravitational pull on my couch is too strong to overcome), I could begin anytime ... This is a good example of uneconomical and irrational behavior. A lack of attention may also explain why Americans pay banks 35 billion dollars in overdraft fees even though they could avoid them in many cases.

Here are two examples of a form of economic tunnel vision. We have massive problems when it comes to taking all relevant information into account when making decisions. We forget to cancel trial subscriptions on time, overlook horrendous shipping costs when bidding on e-bay auctions and allow ourselves to be guided by irrelevant information when purchasing stocks. That comes as no surprise to psychologists and neurologists. We human beings have a limited attention span, even though our brains try to tell us otherwise. They create the illusion of an accurately detailed perception; yet at the same time they neglect details they regard as irrelevant. Experiments have shown that people fail to hear sounds while working on crossword puzzles and that they overlook clowns riding on unicycles when talking on their mobile phones. People are even capable of overlooking a gorilla that crosses their field of vision when they are concentrating on other things at the same moment. One of the best-known and most impressive demonstrations of his phenomenon is the video experiment conducted by the American psychologists Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons. A number of different versions of the film can be viewed on the Internet. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo)

Viewers were asked to count the number of passes thrown during a basketball game. Nearly everyone arrived at the correct answer – but totally overlooked the gorilla that walks across the screen during the game. Chabris and Simons wrote a book about our selective perception in 2010: The Invisible Gorilla.

Inattentiveness can have expensive consequences for individuals, but it can also cause markets to function poorly. A team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania determined on the basis of the prices for

Photos © Chabris/Simons via youtube

22 million used cars that buyers focus above all on the first digit that appears on the odometer. That results in astonishing price differences. A person who wants to sell a car that has been driven 79900 km gets about 210 dollars more than he would if he sold the car at just over 80000 km. But an odometer reading of 78800 km brings in just ten dollars more. In order to verify their findings, the researchers invited 130 students to take part in an experiment. They showed them two cars, after which they had to remember the odometer readings. Many of them remembered only the first digit and filled the gaps in their memories with false information. They regularly overestimated the mileage on cars with readings of less than 10000 km and underestimated those with odometer readings above that mark.

What is so surprising about these findings is that the mileage figure is easier to find than information on account fees. The researchers came to the following conclusion: "Distortions resulting from the way in which we process information can influence markets, even when information is readily accessible." A lack of attention can have dire consequences for laymen and professionals alike. That is demonstrated by a study conducted by the US researchers Stefano DellaVigna and Joshua Pollet, who found that investors react hesitantly to announcements of profits posted by companies on a Friday.

They are evidently distracted by the weekend. (http://eml.berkeley.edu/~sdellavi/wp/ earnfr080204.pdf)

In order to correlate such studies more closely, DellaVigna developed a method for measuring inattentiveness. According to his calculations, consumers are extraordinarily blind when it comes to taxes. Prices posted on supermarket shelves normally do not include sales tax, which is added at the checkout counter. One experiment showed that consumers suddenly show less interest in products when sales taxes are indicated on shelf labels – even though it makes no difference at all in the end price.

Top models influence investors

Thus the ways in which people allocated their attention has an influence on decisions of all kinds. Economists are now attempting to design models to account for this fact. Researchers who wish to test such models under real-life conditions face a problem, however. It is difficult for them to determine which items of information an individual takes into consideration and which ones he or she ignores.

Economists Jordi Mondria (University of Toronto), Thomas Wu and Yi Zhang (both from the University of Santa Cruz) have found a way of solving this problem. They evaluated 21 million search queries posted by 650,000 Americans. The researchers were able not only to determine which items of information people were looking for also to identify the links they actually clicked on.

On the basis of these data, they succeeded in explaining a phenomenon that has been causing financial market researchers headaches for many years: the fact that investors always tend to prefer shares of stock issued in their home countries. They do not distribute their investments globally and thus forego returns unnecessarily.

The researchers determined that the attention Americans pay to certain countries correlates closely with the countries in which they invest their money. And the more popular a country is, the greater the tendency of US citizens to invest in stocks and bonds from that country. Astoundingly, however, their attention is not guided by fundamental economic data alone. So-called soft factors that have nothing to do with the economy also play a role. Americans tend to invest more money in countries that have numerous sights and are listed in the UNESCO list of Cultural Heritage Sites. The same applies to countries that produce large numbers of top female models.

Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir have adopted a different approach to the phenomenon of tunnel vision.

Sendhil Mullainathan has roots in India and is now a professor of economics at Harvard. Eldar Shafir teaches and pursues research in psychology at Princeton. In their book entitled Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much (German version: Knappheit: Was es mit uns macht, wenn wir zu wenig haben, 2013, Campus Verlag, ISBN 9783593396774) they pose a number of questions: Why does poverty still exist all over the world? Why is obesity so widespread? Why do lonely people find it harder to make friends? All of these seemingly unrelated questions are pertinent to the phenomenon of scarcity – of time, resources of social contacts. The authors report on small farmers and street merchants in India, unemployed people and lonely, overworked, poor and sick people, all of whom have one thing in common: their lives are controlled by scarcity. Scarcity affects the

subconscious mind. Although we may not be aware of it, it influences our abilty to focus our attention, our perceptions, our interpretation of situations and the ways in which we deal with problems. At any given time, we become more attentive and efficient under the influence of scarcity so that we can deal with an urgent matter with the limited means at our disposal – but only with the most urgent, absolutely necessary matters. Everything else is swept under the table.

The authors also discovered that people suffering from scarcity show less empathy, react more impulsively, think ahead less often, make different decisions and tend to make more mistakes. And that is where tunnel vision enters the picture. Under conditions of scarcity, everything outside the tunnel is largely ignored. Furthermore, scarcity prevents people from accessing all of their cognitive capacities. People who are "stuck" in the tunnel due to financial problems are unable to focus on such matters as health or education.

Recommendations for combating tunnel vision

The authors also offer recommendations for combating tunnel vision. Affected individuals need to free their minds first of all. Sleep or days of rest are most helpful in this context. Thus it is also high time to take a critical look at the matter of overtime. Overtime can help increase productivity in the short run, but the restricted bandwidth soon begins to diminish the quality of performance. People work longer but accomplish less, which means they have to work even longer. You get the idea: tunnel vision and tunnel tax – for inefficiency in life outside the workplace as well.

Internet sites and tunnel vision

Designers of Internet sites have invented a different meaning for tunnel vision. Cleverly selected colors, corresponding contrasts and blank spaces generate tunnel vision in the viewers of website pages. The resulting focus directs the reader's attention to a specific part of the page. The so-called tunnel-vision technique prevents readers from shifting their attention to other parts of the page. Their gaze is directed to the place on the page that is most important to the operator of the site. That may be the spot where the crucial impulse to buy is triggered or where the user is asked to enter his data on a registration form. As an incentive, many companies offer such features as e-books, video tutorials or free, downloadable software. The lists compiled in this way are forwarded to the sales department, which transforms interested readers into direct-marketing customers.

By definition, sales-optimized websites serve the sole purpose of selling products or services. In content marketing, the contents offered at these target sites are intended to build trust and encourage potential customers to buy. Ideally, lead-optimized and sales-optimized sites are perfectly matched and form part of a holistic sales strategy. www.contentgarden. com/landingpageoptimierung/

Moritz Anderten Anderten is a member of the academic staff of Department of Health and Social Psychology at the Psychologisches Institut der Deutschen Sporthochschule Köln. He is managing director of the" mentaltal-ent.de" project, which is devoted to providing psychological counselling for young ath-letes in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia

Fully focused on the Here and Now

How athletes use tunnel vision to avoid distractions

As a freelance sports psychologist, Moritz Anderton provides advice and guidance for competitive athletes from all age groups. On a freelance basis, he and his colleagues work with athletes from the German national team at the Rhineland Olympic Training Center. We spoke with him about tunnel vision in sports.

? Why is tunnel vision a help rather than a hindrance for athletes?
:: There are two kinds of tunnel vision in sports. The one is a more long-term phenomenon and relates to planning for an entire season or year. Training times and methods are determined, rest phases are planned and goals are defined in keeping with the schedule of tournaments or competitions. These precisely defined goals help maintain discipline, continuity and quality in training. Thus we can reasonably speak of a form of tunnel vision when an athlete concentrates fully on his goal for the season and adheres consistently to his training program.

? So what is short-term tunnel vision?
:: At major events in track and field or swimming, for example, when stadiums are full and the PA announcer generates a mood of excitement among the spectators, and the athletes are surrounded by cameras and photographers, mentally well-trained athletes can switch to the tunnel vision mode and focus solely on the impending start or the next objective. The goal is to shut out all disruptive or distracting influences. As fascinating and thrilling all of the surrounding activity may be, it may prevent the athlete from concentrating on the start. The athlete has trained for the start over and over again, the whole season long, and the moment of truth has come – it's all or nothing – and every distraction must be eliminated. That is the point at which visualization techniques and inner dialogs can help.

? I think you need to explain that to us!
:: Visualization is an intensive process of imagining an upcoming task – often with closed eyes. We recognize it easily when we watch skiers or bobsled pilots. They close their eyes and imagine the slope they are about to race down. Their heads move from left to right, often accompanied by their entire body, and all mental processes are put on automatic pilot, so to speak, one last time. Inner dialogs are used to program the sequence of actions: "Full speed on the starting slope, a steep approach to the third gate, hold the momentum on the straightaways and into the finish run, glide ..." That's how skiers talk to themselves over and over again before the starting signal is fired. These dialogs are well-rehearsed rituals – nothing is left to chance.

Imagine that it's late in the fourth quarter of the last basketball game of the season. The crowd is howling at fever pitch, and you are about to make the free throw that could decide everything. Now you have to get the possibly less-than-favorable score out of your mind. "I'm totally calm. I see nothing but the rim of the basket. I can feel the ball in my hand. I am fully aware of the arm that is about to straighten and put the ball in the basket." These are the dialogs we practice over and over with athletes in order to get them to concentrate fully on the moment at hand – because it is all that matters .

? So you mean that preparation, and especially mental preparation, is the key?
:: Optimal preparation can be half the battle. It often begins very early on. The national soccer team withdrew to a training camp in Austria long before the World Cup in Brazil, for example. There, the team was able to shut out all distractions and concentrate on the tournament. That is surely an unusually "huge" example, but it clearly shows that long-term preparation is often the key to success. And that applies to other sports as well. Boxers, wrestlers and martial arts athletes are familiar with specific fighting concepts that define techniques and strategies and determine the choice between offensive or defensive tactics. Every judoka or boxer adapts his approach with reference to each individual opponent. Or take Roger Federer, for example. He has been one of the top three tennis players in the world for more than a decade. He rarely loses to players who are not in the top ten. And he obviously prepares meticulously for every match, analyzing his opponent's weaknesses and opposing them with his own strengths. In this way, matches are planned, tactics worked out and ideas developed. Most top athletes follow this simple rule: the sport comes first, and everything else is secondary. For these athletes, sports, goals and success have top priority in life. That having been said, it is always important to ensure that an athlete's mental health remains intact. Long-term success is possible only when an athlete feels comfortable with it and remains mentally fit.

? And what happens when, in spite of the best preparation, the chosen strategy fails because the opponent plays differently than expected??
:: In that case, the question arises as to whether athletes have worked out a Plan B or Plan C during the preparation phase. Trainers also play a significant role in this context, provided they are able to intervene in a game or competition. Due to the complexity of the situation, it is often too difficult for the athlete to recognize and implement the better tactics during a match or a fight. In such cases the trainer should request a time-out and pull a different tactic out of his sleeve. In sports in which trainers are not permitted to intervene, an athlete's ability to switch tactics quickly on his or her own volition is another important mental skill.

? Lengthy, detailed analysis, good preparation and the ability to avoid distraction at the crucial moment – it all sounds quite simple.
:: Competitive athletes learn over the course of their careers to prepare optimally for the most important events and to perform at their best on those occasions. Clearly defined goals, a properly functioning support system and sufficient autonomy help ensure long-term motivation and performance capacity

Between the scalpel and the chain saw

or: tunnel vision may also be a gift ...

Dr. med. Philipp Schöttes (54) has been a trauma surgeon since 1989. Within the field of trauma surgery he has specialized in the surgical treatment of injuries to the spinal cord. He works in a large, maximum care clinic in Dortmund. We met with him near a 300-year-old beech tree in the forest south of Witten. A branch as thick as most whole trees had broken off during a storm. Dr. Schöttes was planning to saw it into transportable sections and move it out of the woods within the next few days. His wood stove at home is a very hungry beast! But what does that have to do with tunnel vision?

For trauma surgeon Philipp Schöttes, tunnel vision is a skill he has developed (and for which he thanks God) in order to maintain his focus on the essential – in cases, for example, in which maximum mental and physical effort is needed to perform difficult tasks. "It wouldn't be good for either the patient or me if I couldn't shut out absolutely everything around me during difficult spinal cord operations involving the removal of bone splinters. At these times I have tunnel vision, and my attention is focused only on the surgical area. The colleague who assists me and the nurse who passes me the instruments work closely with me so that I needn't redirect my gaze and my concentration to anything outside the surgical field of view." Of course he finds time for mental relaxation between periods of maximal mental tension. Not every operation involves emergency surgery following severe injuries; many are planned and well-prepared interventions. "Preparation plays a big role. We order x-rays, computer tomograms, magnetic resonance tomograms or other images prior to such operations. I have to study all of these very carefully to ensure that I don't miss the often tiny details. Although I am very familiar with the human anatomy, these operations are often performed to eliminate or correct deviations from the norm. You have to look very closely to determine exactly what has been shifted out of position or fractured into multiple pieces by the injury. I then consult with my colleagues during the preparatory briefing to determine the most effective and, if possible, the least invasive surgical procedure."

He also regards it as very important to ensure that patients (and their relatives) are given a thorough explanation of the purpose of the operation, the planned surgical procedure and the risks and chances of success before surgery is actually performed. He has learned from experience that it is beneficial for patients to know that the surgeon will be operating on the basis of a treatment concept. That makes them calmer and helps them see that there is a remedy for the disaster they have suffered.

Surgeons can also talk to patients about their personal experience in dealing with similar injuries. And the patient can be positioned precisely on the operating table before the operation begins, so that the surgeon can work effectively and without distractions. "Preparations of this kind eventually become second nature, but they protect against unpleasant surprises and help avoid tunnel vision. A clear overview is always preferable to surprises."

Thus taking sufficient time is the best way to prevent tunnel vision in situations in which that is possible. But there are other situations, of course.

Emergency admissions

Accidents are a natural part of the work of a trauma surgeon. He may fly to the scene of an accident as an emergency physician, or he may be one of the first doctors to treat an injured person in the emergency room. "That American TV series evoked a lot of false impressions. In Germany, we usually have about thirty minutes before the patient arrives with a helicopter or an ambulance. We are notified about the accident and the probable injuries very early on. That allows enough time for 12 to 15 specialists in anesthesiology, trauma surgery, neurosurgery, oral and maxillofacial surgery and radiology to make their way to the emergency room.

The kind of hectic hustle and bustle dramatized on television doesn't actually take place in a hospital, because it isn't at all helpful. "Most people don't believe it, but when confronted with a victim of severe multiple injuries who is bleeding everywhere, we need no more than two or three minutes to determine which injury is the most threatening and must therefore be surgically treated first. Once that decision has been made, the OP team is put together and goes to work immediately. These decisions must be correct, which means that they require a great deal of experience and involve considerable responsibility. Everything happens so quickly only because every sequence of events and every step in the process is specified in detail and practiced repeatedly and because everyone involved knows precisely what he or she has to do. That is pure teamwork. A complete overview of the situation is essential, and there's no time for tunnel vision."

Some operations or partial surgical procedures are quite routine. Preparations are more or less complicated, depending on the type of surgery required, and the scalpel – the symbol for the surgeon – plays the smallest role in these preparations. Once the initial incision has been made, tweezers and scissors are the most important instruments used to advance layer by layer into the interior of the body. "But once you've exposed the broken bone, for instance, the routine ends immediately. For at that point on, every case is different, as no two bones break in exactly the same way." Regardless of what appears in the various images, the surgeon must register the essential details of the break and compare them with the x-rays. Then the final decision regarding the procedure to be used in fixing the bone is made. Aside from years of experience in the preparation and performance of surgical treatments, critical and constructive consultation with colleagues plays an essential role during the preparatory phase.

And the operations performed on the injured spinal cord in which Philipp Schöttes has specialized pose very special requirements in their own right. "When the bone marrow and the nerve roots are exposed, the work becomes extremely strenuous" – and not only because x-rays must almost always have to be taken during the operation in order to maintain control of the operating situation and provide for proper documentation. This means that the surgeon has to wear a lead apron for hours. The structures to be prepared with such precision are so delicate that the surgeon has to view the surgical area through a microscope in many cases. That brings along an entirely new form of tunnel vision, but in these cases I ask the surgical team for total silence. Otherwise, conversations and discussions do occur during operations when eve-

Philipp Schöttes

rything is proceeding smoothly. That is fine and quite normal during so-called routine interventions or phases. But when every motion has to be exactly right and I am compelled to work with total concentration, then I need things and people around me to be much quieter. That is the moment in which I deliberately enter this tunnel." And just as deliberately as he initiates this phase of maximum concentration, he emerges from it again. "Once this phase is completed and we return to a more routine procedure in which, for example, the wound is closed, then I give the all-clear, and conversation is allowed again. My tunnel vision is over at that point, and I can begin to talk with colleagues about the operation or the weather again."

Stress and stress relief

This kind of work requires a calm hand, and a surgeon must be able to relax if he is to maintain a calm hand and avoid the risk of neglecting his own health. How is that possible for people who are frequently on call or have to work night shifts? Philipp Schöttes seeks relaxation in the woods. But it is more than the chirping birds that attract him. "We installed a wood furnace at home a couple of years ago, and it has to be fed. We need several cubic meters of wood every winter." These he gets from the forests of the Ruhr region, where he wields his chain saw with the approval of the local foresters. Others might opt for jogging or cycling instead. "Too boring for me, too monotonous. But I can power down completely when I'm sawing and splitting wood after I've pulled it out of the forest. But I have rarely felled a tree. I'm almost always dealing with fallen trees lying on the ground."

Dressed in his green-and-orange protective clothing and wearing a helmet and hearing protection, he takes off with his tractor and trailer to obtain fuel to keep his living room warm. "That often requires more concentration than my work in the operating room. When whole trees are knocked over, as they were during the spring storm this year, the work can be dangerous." People with little experience in such matters can easily cut into the wood on the wrong side, and a branch as thick as a person's thigh suddenly juts forward, possibly breaking a few bones in the process. And the running chain saw poses a risk as well. "Nothing like that has happened to me so far. I think there might be a parallel to the medical profession. You've got to take your time, think ahead and assess the situation on the basis of all of the experience you have acquired. But I've treated a number people for injuries incurred while working with a chain saw. I always ask them to describe their accidents in detail – not in the emergency room, of course, but later. That is a kind of continuing education for me, and when I tell them about my hobby, they also enjoy talking about it. So I don't have to make all of the mistakes myself."

Lichtschacht

Coming soon: **Theme**Booklet 3

[Topic: "Competence rather than power – the road to fluid organizations"...]

Since the mid-1990s, organizations and systems have been operating in an environment subject to such rapidly changing requirements that hierarchical structures soon reach the limits of their effectiveness and become too inflexible to respond to these changes appropriately. Under these circumstances, fluid organizations are much more efficient and powerful. They needn't wait until a decision is made at the highest level of the organizational hierarchy. They can make the decision themselves, and without delay. Decision-making responsibility is delegated to those who possess the greatest technical and professional competence.

That competence is not always restricted to the top level of the hierarchy, and such responsibility can be assumed by every authorized member of a competence team. Thus everyone in a fluid organization is permitted to make decisions within the scope of their abilities. That relieves executive management of pressure, accelerates the decision-making process and enhances the quality of decisions. Fluid organizations are particularly well suited for creative, innovative systems and for organizations in which the level of complexity is particularly high. Learn what that means for business enterprises, their managers and their employees in our next Theme Booklet.

Colophon

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