

Rita McGrath, Praised Management Expert at Columbia Business School, Writes Column for Dialogue.com: Stop flying blind

Simple techniques can vastly improve leaders' understanding, writes Rita Gunther McGrath.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES,
December 14, 2022 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- See the full link to the column here:

<https://dialoguereview.com/stop-flying-blind/>

Leveraging diverse perspectives helps avoid blind spots. Yet people still see leaders continuing to use practices that restrict access to vital data.



Rita McGrath

People are allowed to interrupt one another. They are afraid to admit to errors. They jump to solutions before carefully considering the evidence. Or, worse still, they only accept evidence that is consistent with their preferences. These behaviors come at major cost. Yet there are simple interventions you can take to counteract them – and you can implement them at whatever organizational level you happen to occupy.

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McGrath states, "I see bad behaviors a lot in corporate efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. They get the diversity part right, then they mess up the inclusion element. The result is that the outcomes they want – a richer pool of ideas – are not achieved."

The no interruption policy:

Years ago, Glen Mazzara, producer of the then-popular television show *ITALS The Shield* *ITALS* noticed that two of his young female writers were silent

during story meetings. He encouraged them to speak up. “Watch what happens when we do,” they responded. Sure enough, every time they began a pitch, they were interrupted by one of the male writers or – worse – the guy would run with their idea and didn’t let them complete their thoughts. The solution? Mazzara instituted a ‘no interruption’ rule so that everyone was given an equal amount of time to present their thoughts. Much to his surprise, it made the entire team more effective.

The nominal group technique:

A group facilitator designs a carefully crafted problem statement. Everyone at the meeting then silently records on paper their ideas about potential approaches. The facilitator then collects an idea from each person and captures them on a flip chart. The group then discusses each one, adding new ideas as they emerge during the discussion. When the facilitator feels all the ideas have received sufficient attention, the group ranks or votes on the ideas.

The creative collision:

Mashing together executives from different industries and contexts yields amazing insights. I put participants into groups with others from different backgrounds and take class time each day to work together on making progress on what we call a ‘personal case’ – a challenge, in this case, involving growth or change. The substantial and rapid progress we typically witness often emerges because the solution wasn’t on the minds of the people bringing the case – but rather from different individuals giving their points of view.

Use public and visible communication

The advent of remote and hybrid have led people to recognize the limitations of communication channels such as emails, chats and texts. Many organizations are taking a page out of the ‘agile’ playbook and turning instead to task boards, where the work being done, who is doing it, and what stage it is at, is visible to everyone. This adds a level of transparency and joint accountability that allows everyone to contribute in their own way.

Promote psychological safety:

This concept, first identified in the 90s by Harvard’s Amy Edmondson, is “the assurance that one can speak up, offer ideas, point out problems, or deliver bad news without fear of retribution”. Without psychological safety, mistakes remain unidentified and uncorrected, systems unfixed and potentially disastrous problems, of which people are acutely aware, allowed to proliferate. A textbook case of this allegedly occurred in the development of the Boeing 737 Max, with employees sharing doubts about the plane’s integrity and that of their own management. Yet as human beings, we are socialized to avoid rocking the boat and certainly not to raise questions about the positions advocated by others, particularly if they are in more senior positions.

This very human tendency led to the widespread adoption of 'crew resource management' training in airlines. The result: in 12 years, US airlines have carried more than eight billion passengers without a fatal crash. All the carriers share information, without punishment for mistakes honestly made.

Each of these practices is eminently doable. Why not give them a try?

For more on Rita McGrath's insights and tools go to:

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