

# HOW TUNNEL VISION CAN PREEMPT YOUR CAREER

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Have you ever thought how much damage people inflict on their careers by acting on outdated, or false, assumptions? People who've been through a grueling job hunt, beaten up by a bad boss, or over-worked and underpaid often take away a lesson from the experience that they apply to similar situations forever after. Call it career-threatening tunnel vision.

If you're burdened with psychic baggage (half-truths, assumptions, or outright falsehoods) you should work at putting it away. Don't let your first instinct be to dismiss new information that doesn't fit into your preconditioned mindset. It's a safe bet that many of your so-called facts are no longer true and you are allowing them to sabotage your career by influencing your decisions. Your rigid thinking will result in poor choices, or no choices at all. Here are some examples of how people irrationally pigeonhole their ideas:

### Misconceptions about the job market

We see many shell-shocked victims of early '90s job hunts. Some people are still making decisions on 1990's realities, even though the job market has done a 180 degree turn. Hirers say they can spot these people through the walls because they have the hangdog look of someone who's sure he/she isn't going to be hired, but is going through the motions. "You don't have any job openings, do you?" is not the way to exude confidence.

Forget the '90s. While there will be another business downturn at some time, present labor shortages mean that it will bring a different set of problems than those experienced back then. The experiences during those years won't be duplicated any more than those during the Great Depression.

### Distrust of all superiors

Pity the worker who, after one hellacious manager, overreacts to any boss who shares even one of the bad manager's characteristics. That worker is paralyzed.

He/she has surrounded himself/herself with a protective shield that blocks out worthwhile suggestions, learning opportunities, or mentoring overtures from the new boss. He/she is unable to get past the memory of the old boss and react to a manager who is a different combination of ingredients.

We saw an attorney lose out on an opportunity with a firm he would have loved and a boss he could have respected because he could not let go of his three previous bad-boss experiences. We shudder when we deal with young people who've been through a series of scruffy jobs where they learned nothing and were treated badly. They are often so angry that they nurse their grievances at the expense of their careers.

### Imposing Self-Limits

Have you convinced yourself that you can't do, or even learn, certain things? Avoiding the new spreadsheet program or declining to attend a training seminar because you're sure you can't do it is terribly career damaging (and certainly not conducive to personal growth).

Employers rarely accept "can't"; they always believe it's a substitute for "won't." At best, your refusal will come across as a there's-nothing-wrong-with-the-old-way attitude. If you're over 50, you'll be pegged as too old to learn; if you're young, you'll be considered obstinate or lazy.

There's nothing more foolish than setting artificial limits on yourself that are founded on fear, distaste, and reluctance to try something new. Tackle the learning task and get on with life. You may surprise yourself.

### Stereotyping Coworkers

Young ones don't have a strong work ethic; older ones are too rigid to learn technology; temps are inept; long-time employees can't get jobs anywhere else; and so on. We won't even bore you with gender and ethnic prejudices. These attitudes will restrict learning opportunities as much as imposing arbitrary limits on your abilities. Until proven wrong, assume everyone has something to offer.

### Cynicism about management methods

How many managers, having been through a company-wide obsession with Total Quality Management or some other debatable management practice, have learned to shut down when any new program is discussed? They won't cull anything useful from any newer—possibly better—management theory because they're still nursing the wounds of the TQM disaster.

### Pessimism about salary and benefit negotiations

We hear, "I've been down that road before," from people who won't ask for a salary adjustment because last year the boss refused. The passage of time makes a difference. A boss who was unaware of a labor shortage last year may be experiencing rampaging turnover now and, therefore, acting on a whole different mindset. Why not give the boss a chance to act rationally even if he/she had rejected opportunities before?

Companies that said they'd never make concessions on flextime, vacation, unpaid leave, and other working conditions are making them now. Here's how quickly a company can react when it needs people: In early 1997, a hirer making an offer would say, "Our range is \$x to \$y and I think I can get you into the top of the range." In January 2006, that same manager is saying, "What salary will it take to get you here?" Don't rely on the negotiating ploys or the salary research you used even one year ago.

Here's another way you can shoot yourself in the foot with a negative attitude about money. We know a candidate who fought so hard for the absolute last dollar that the hirer withdrew the job offer. The candidate wasn't greedy, he was trying to get even with his former employer for underpaying him! Yes, he behaved irrationally. The goal is to overcome knee-jerk responses with more rational strategies.

### Does An Objective Measurement... Continued from page 16

the x axis. A correlation coefficient ( $r$  value 0 to 1) was computed for each graph and judged to be significant if the  $p$  value was less than 0.05. A high correlation coefficient, ( $r$  value greater than 0.6) would indicate the Müller's maneuver predicted a high AHI, reflecting a diagnosis of sleep apnea. A  $p$  value less than 0.05 meant there was only one chance in 20 that the difference between the measures during the Müller's maneuver versus the AHI was due only to chance.

The Results section is a summary and analysis of data. For this project, ten subjects were studied prior to their NPSG. For the cross sectional area comparison with the AHI, the correlation coefficient was  $r = 0.72$  with a  $p$  value = 0.037. For the pressure delay comparison with the AHI, the correlation coefficient was  $r = 0.63$  with a  $p$  value = 0.048. Therefore, both correlation coefficients proved predictive for the AHI with statistical significance at  $p$  less than 0.05.

The Conclusion was: yes, upper airway change during a Müller's maneuver does predict the severity of OSA. Therefore, in this project, the Hypothesis was supported.

The Reflections section offers an opportunity to critique the project by suggesting possible modifications that could improve the quality of future research. For example, a lengthy time separation between performing the Müller's maneuver and performing the NPSG could reduce the correlation coefficient. Reflections can also include a comparison with other similar research projects. Clinical Implications represent the connection between the research world and the actual clinical world. For this project, the research provides a novel tool for screening patients for OSA and may help define patients who could benefit from an ENT evaluation.

The *Future Research* section follows the theme that completed research should lead to new research. For example, this project led to patients having rapid sequence CT scans of the neck. The CT images were sorted and labeled for inhalation and exhalation, facilitating another screening test for sleep apnea. The *Bibliography* section lists references from similar research. The *Acknowledgement* section lists financial support provided to the project and the *Conflicts of Interest* (COI) section lists any COI for each person involved in the project.



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