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**Senior Executive Blind Spots: 6-Minute Reality Check**

*For Senior Leaders*

**The Setup**

Work with a partner to examine a realistic scenario, then identify what blind spots might be operating in your own organization. Total time: 6 minutes.

**Case Study: David Martinez, CEO of Apex Technologies**

**The Surface Story (1 minute to read):** David's been CEO for 3 years. The board loves him, revenue is growing, and he's proud of the "positive culture" he's built. He points to their open-door policy, quarterly town halls, and innovation awards as proof.

**The Troubling Metrics:**

* Employee turnover up 28% this year
* Latest product launch met specs but bombed in market adoption
* Innovation initiatives keep stalling despite adequate funding
* His internal approval rating dropped from 85% to 62%

**What Confidential Exit Interviews Reveal:**

* Employees are afraid to bring bad news ("shoot the messenger" culture)
* Decisions get reversed without explanation, making people feel stupid
* Innovation awards go to safe projects, not real risk-taking
* There's an unspoken rule to "manage up" rather than solve real problems
* People lack information needed to actually do their jobs well

**David's Blind Spots:**

* Thinks formal structures (town halls, open doors) create real communication
* Believes his intent translates into impact
* Assumes people will tell him the truth because he "welcomes feedback"
* Doesn't see how his reactions train people to filter information
* Confuses activity (innovation programs) with results (actual innovation)

**Partner Discussion (4 minutes total)**

**Round 1: The Executive Trap (90 seconds)**

* What signs was David missing that his "positive culture" wasn't real?
* How might his own behavior be creating the fear-based responses?
* Why do you think his approval rating dropped while he remained oblivious?

**Round 2: Your Organization Reality Check (90 seconds)**

* What formal structures do you rely on that might not be working as intended?
* Where might there be a gap between your intent and your team's experience?
* What uncomfortable truths might people be reluctant to share with you?

**Round 3: Action Planning (60 seconds)**

* What's one area where you might be getting filtered information?
* How could you test whether your culture actually encourages truth-telling?

**Quick Self-Assessment (30 seconds)**

Rate your confidence 1-5 on these critical areas:

**Information Quality**: You're getting unfiltered truth from your team \_\_\_/5

**Cultural Reality**: Your stated values match actual behavior patterns \_\_\_/5

**Decision Impact**: People understand and support your decision-making \_\_\_/5

**Fear Factor**: People feel safe bringing you problems and bad news \_\_\_/5

**Red Flag**: If you rated yourself 4+ on everything, you might have the biggest blind spot of all - overconfidence in your own awareness.

**The Hard Truth About Senior Executive Blind Spots**

**You think**: Open doors create honest communication
**Reality**: Fear doesn't walk through open doors

**You think**: People will tell you if something's wrong
**Reality**: People tell you what they think you want to hear

**You think**: Your good intentions matter most
**Reality**: Your reactions matter more than your intentions

**You think**: Formal feedback channels work
**Reality**: Real feedback happens in hallway conversations you're not part of

**Your Monday Morning Action**

**Stop asking**: "Is everything going well?"
**Start doing**: Anonymous listening sessions with neutral facilitators

**Stop measuring**: Participation in your programs
**Start measuring**: Speed of bad news reaching you

The higher you go, the more people work to protect you from uncomfortable truths. Your biggest blind spot is probably believing you're the exception.

**Your Action Item**: Find someone who will tell you what your organization really thinks about your leadership. Then actually listen without defending.