

## Getting Rid Of Blind Spots In Customer Conversations

---

Over coffee, I discussed the challenges of teen drivers with my good friend and business advisor, Daniel Behr. Daniel is currently an early-stage venture investor at Access Bridge Gap Ventures with many years of experience in venture creation and innovation. Like me, he is the parent of two teenagers.

To increase their safety behind the wheel, Daniel and his oldest son took a crash prevention driving course at In Control Driving. One of the things they learned was that the conventional wisdom regarding how we position our car mirrors can be deadly. Like most people, I set the mirrors so that I could see the edge of the car.

I assumed that the only way to deal with the resulting blind spots was to turn my head to look behind me for passing cars or purchase the blind spot monitoring device that comes with some new vehicles. One approach is dangerous and the other is expensive (and in fact unnecessary).

After we finished our coffee, Daniel then showed me how to reset my car mirrors to eliminate major blind spots. (I'll share the trick at the end of this article).

Daniel warned me that the reset mirrors would feel very awkward and uncomfortable. He was right. However, as he predicted, the next time I drove on the highway I noticed that major blind spots were eliminated.

Blind spots are not only dangerous to drivers but to technology based businesses as well. Mirror blind spots make it hard to see nearby cars. Business blind spots make it hard to see roadblocks to revenue growth.

One of the many business blind spots occurs when technology companies talk to customers to get feedback on their product and services. These companies often fail to send the right people to ask the right customers the right questions. They also usually fail to listen appropriately.

There are many reasons for this:

- They are deeply invested in the success of the product and don't want to risk hearing that their baby is ugly.

- They lack the skills and expertise to ask the right follow-up questions and lead the customer through a meaningful dialogue. Asking a customer what they think of your product is often counterproductive, since most people want to be nice and avoid confrontation by not saying anything negative. A skilled customer researcher can elicit honest answers.
- Companies believe their product is fantastic and thus fail to hear anything that can contradict their convictions. Engineers and sales people often suffer from “happy hearing” and fall victim to a “hear no evil” approach to listening to customers.

Some of the many questions that an experienced and unbiased interviewer will ask include:

- How could this product make your life better?
- What problems could this product solve for you?
- What is the impact to you if these problems go away?
- Would you actually buy it and use it?
- Who else is involved in the decision to buy this type of product?
- Plus many more...

I drove for years and dealt with the dreaded blind spots. It took a knowledgeable and caring friend to show me how to minimize this danger. However, as Daniel predicted, change is difficult.

The same is true for businesses. As they try to better understand their customers, they may find it difficult to eliminate their blind spots. Sometimes it takes an unbiased and experienced outsider to show you how to avoid the blind spots in your customer conversations and coach you through the process of improving your behavior.

### ***How To Eliminate Major Car Mirror Blind Spots***

- Sitting in the driver’s seat, lean as far as you can to your left
- Adjust the driver’s mirror until you can just see the edge of your car
- Lean a similar distance to the right
- Adjust the passenger’s mirror until you can just see the edge of your car
- This will feel very strange so it will take a while to get used to it
- However, you will notice that using your rear view mirror, side mirrors and your peripheral vision, cars in adjacent lanes will now remain visible with no interruptions.

The Car Talk guys on National Public Radio have [posted instructions on using this technique](#).  
Safe driving!

--Author [Neil Baron](#) can be reached at [nbaron@baronstrategic.com](mailto:nbaron@baronstrategic.com)