



# Unquestioned Brilliance: Navigating a Fundamental Leadership Trap

*John Austin*

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It does not matter if you are an experienced leader or are just starting out as a new manager or entrepreneur, the techniques outlined in *Unquestioned Brilliance* can improve your decision making and critical thinking.

All leaders must walk a fine line between creating focus and questioning conventional wisdom, between confidence in their ability and unrealistic overconfidence, and between the demands of fast action and a clear-eyed assessment of the situation. Unquestioned brilliance gets in the way of this balance. It is a fundamental leadership trap.

This particular leadership trap limits innovation and critical thinking and contributes to risk aversion within leadership teams. Because this process tends to happen without thought, leaders need to actively counteract this cognitive dysfunction within their teams. The book outlines ten techniques, built from research and validated through application, designed to counter the fundamental leadership trap.

Some common implications of unquestioned brilliance:

- We argue that our profession or industry is too complex for outsiders to understand and yet we immediately form strong "common sense" opinions about things outside our area of expertise.
- We set our strategy based on today's world and are slow to acknowledge when fundamental changes in the external environment make this plan no longer a good fit for tomorrow's world.
- We spend significant amounts of time attempting to keep stakeholders satisfied. Yet we spend very little time trying to understand why people choose not to engage with our organization or questioning our understanding of stakeholder interests.
- We carefully design our initiatives. Yet we do not look for, or even acknowledge, the blind spots in our plans.

The techniques outlined in this book can help leaders and their teams begin building their strategic thinking muscles and help them to better navigate around the unquestioned brilliance trap.

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