

Inattentional blindness – Watch Out for That Gorilla in the Room

Inattentional Blindness

Unless we pay very close attention, we will miss even the most conspicuous of events. Moreover, even when we are told to pay attention beforehand and that something will happen, we miss the event.

Why?

There was an experiment where 100 volunteers were asked to view a video of a non-fatal car crash between a yellow and blue car. At the end of the video, the volunteers were asked, did the **red or blue car cause the crash?**

There was no RED car

In another experiment, volunteers were asked to **count the number of times** a team in a white colored jersey scored a basket. During the experiment, a person in a Gorilla suit walks by.

When the experiment was over, and the researcher asked how many baskets were scored, different answers were given.

However, no one mentioned the Gorilla.

A similar experiment repeated, people waiting at an elevator, a Gorilla walks by, no one mentions a thing.

Did they not notice, did they choose to ignore the Gorilla, or did Inattentional Blindness impact them?

How did we miss a simple detail like that?

Some research suggests it's a visual-spatial breakdown that can explain some of the variance.

In an experiment conducted with pilots in a flight simulator, putting gauges in front of their field of vision, pilots were quick to notice the gauges, but put a plane in their field of vision; they missed the plane.

How can you miss a plane right in front of you?

How many of us have missed things right in front of us?

Ever hear the saying: Do not put anything right in front of me, I will never find it.

Messages, stimuli, perceptions of expectations (in an earlier post, what happened when we were expecting apple pie but got a spinach pie instead)

Ever get a call from a friend asking why you ignored them? When you ask for details, they tell you they saw you, perhaps at a mall or movie, they waved at you, and you were staring right at them, but then turned away.

Imagine now as cybersecurity professionals; we are conducting a forensic investigation of some cloud distributed data. We follow our methodology; we are looking for specific traces, timestamps, log file modifications, very specific clues that will tell us what files could have been modified.

See the problem here?

- 1) *We are looking for **specific** traces.*

Our senses, even though working, maybe not aware, **we could even be working at not being aware** – we saw the gorilla, but did we actively choose to ignore the gorilla.

The problem is later on when we need the information again; we may remember the gorilla, but not remember where we saw the gorilla.

Where did we see that gorilla, the basketball game, the zoo, on a news report?

Some research suggests its due to our visual field, sometimes our eyes, if not interrupted (we are watching the game) we do not see these interruptions. There has been some research that says it could depend on the color, e.g., a person in a black Gorilla suit will be more noticeable than a person in a white Gorilla suit – depending on the colors of the team's jerseys.

2) *Very specific clues.*

Just like the volunteers who were told to count the specific number of baskets, or told to watch the specific car crash. We are already setting our perceptions up that we will be looking for or at a specific thing – and all the while we miss the Gorilla in the room.

Therefore, as we are doing our investigations, examining log files, checking hash values, etc., make sure not to be blinded by Inattentional Blindness and look for that Gorilla

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