



## **THE BLACK SPOT**

**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage participants to focus on the context of something. To help participants understand and accept how and why people, clients or customers focus on blemishes and imperfections in products and services.

**PROCEDURE:** Either draw a small black spot on a flip chart, or distribute white sheets of paper with a small black spot to each participant.

Ask a participant to report what s/he sees on the flip chart (or sheet). Most often, the respondent will say “a black spot.”

Ask a number of other persons the same question, and elicit their responses.

Then affirm to them that you indeed also see a black spot, but note that most individuals overlooked the large white space surrounding it. In the same way, the context around us is often missed or underestimated (as in the organization’s culture, or the importance of our interpersonal relationships at work). To paraphrase the poet John Donne, “No person is an island, entire to itself. Therefore, never inquire for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

Alternatively, you might point that people tend to identify small and large blemishes in our products and services, and many times they have the right to expect them to be fixed.

In conclusion, sometimes it is appropriate that we, too, should look for the “black spot,” while at other times we may need to force ourselves to consider the large white area of equal or greater importance.

**MATERIALS  
REQUIRED:**

A flip chart or preprinted sheets with black spots on them.

**APPROXIMATE**

**TIME REQUIRED:** Five-ten minutes.

Reference: Unknown though inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson’s tales of a pirate receiving the “cursed black spot.”