The Visibility Gap Exists. But Why?

Every organization wants to recognize and reward value.

So why does valuable work so often go unnoticed?

At first glance, the answer seems simple.

People are busy.

Organizations move quickly.

Leaders can't see everything.

While all of those things contribute to the problem, I've come to believe there's a deeper reason.

We see activity more easily than we see value.

We see:

- Meetings attended
- Emails sent
- Reports completed
- Projects launched
- Tickets closed
- Deadlines met

These things are visible.

They leave evidence.

They appear on dashboards.

They show up in status reports.

Value often doesn't.

Value Is Frequently Indirect

Some of the most important contributions rarely produce immediate, visible outcomes.

The crisis that never happened.

The customer who stayed.

The employee who didn't quit.

The conflict resolved before it escalated.

The knowledge shared that prevented someone from making an expensive mistake.

The leader who quietly built trust long before it was needed.

The work happened.

The value was created.

But the contribution itself often remained invisible.

Success Hides the Work That Created It

Throughout my career, I've noticed something interesting.

The smoother things run, the less visible the effort behind them becomes.

When a project succeeds, people celebrate the outcome.

They rarely see:

- the coaching
- the preparation
- the relationship building
- the negotiations
- and the risk management

that made the success possible.

Ironically, the better someone is at preventing problems, the less likely others are to notice their contribution.

Organizations Reward What They Can See

Most organizations don't intentionally ignore value.

They simply reward what is easiest to observe.

Visible activity receives attention.

Invisible contributions often do not.

That creates a subtle problem. Over time, people begin to focus on what gets noticed rather than what creates the most value.

Not because they are selfish.

Because they are human.

The Hidden Cost

When valuable work remains invisible, organizations lose more than recognition opportunities.

They lose understanding.

People stop seeing what actually drives success.

They reward outcomes without understanding how those outcomes were achieved.

They celebrate results while overlooking the people, behaviors, and decisions that made those results possible.

Eventually, valuable contributions disappear from view altogether.

Making Value Visible

This is one of the reasons I became interested in The Visibility Gap.

The Visibility Gap exists in the space between **value created** and **value recognized**.

The challenge isn't that valuable work isn't happening.

The challenge is that valuable work is often difficult to see, understand, connect to outcomes, and recognize.

And the more I explore this idea, the more convinced I become that:

The value that matters most is often the hardest for others to see.

That's exactly why Making Value Visible matters.

Because the truth is:

The value that matters most is often the hardest for others to see.

And that's exactly why making value visible matters.

Continue the Conversation

I'm Stephanie Marcus, founder of CanterPointe. I write about visibility, leadership, change, recognition, and organizational culture.

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