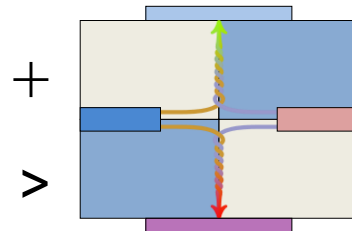




Clear Impact

Simple truths. Consistently applied.

DRAWING A POLARITY MAP



- 1) Choose a polarity that you think would be useful to explore
- 2) Draw a 2 x 2 matrix with space to write the polarity, then put a “+” to the left of the top row and a “>” to the left of the bottom row. For this example we’ll use Task & People.
- 3) You often will have an idea which of the two is over-privileged, or biased, by you or others. For example, in most organizations Action is privileged over Reflection, Operational over Strategic, and Consistency over Flexibility. Put the over-privileged term on the left and the other on the right. The order doesn’t matter if you’re not sure.
- 4) Explain that the top left box is for what’s good about that pole. In our example, “What’s good about being Task focused?” You might hear “get things done” or “success.”
- 5) After you’ve gotten a few words or phrases, move to the top right. In our example, “OK, now, what’s good about being People focused?” You might hear “engagement” or “morale.”
- 6) Then explain that the bottom left is not what is bad about being Task focused. Rather, it’s “What happens if we over-privilege Task over People? That is, what happens if we make focusing on Task very important at the expense of being focused on People?” You might hear “demotivate” or “upset.”
- 7) Then move to the bottom right: “This is not about what’s negative about being People focused. It’s what happens if we make a focus on People very important at the expense of being focused on Task?” You might hear, “Work doesn’t get done” or “failure.”
- 8) Help people see what happens when we over-privilege either side. For example, even if someone really wants to focus on Task, if they over-privilege Task they get the downside, demotivated, upset employees who will not be optimally engaged to get the Task done. Similarly, even if someone really cares about People, when there is not enough focus on Task then people feel lack of direction, become demoralized

or disengaged, and can even lose their jobs. So no matter which one is initially more important to you, over-privileging that side will eventually undermine that side.

- 9) Then look at the very top box. Ask, “What would people who are Task focused and those who are People focused both agree on?” This is the desired outcome. It might be, “Sustainable high performance with highly engaged employees.” Then look at the very bottom box. This is what both would agree they are afraid of. It might be, “Poor results, low morale, lose good people.” It helps when people who privilege either side see that they actually agree on a deeper level.
- 10) Sometimes the top box is actually a principle that encompasses or incorporates both poles. Trying to find this principle is a very good exercise. For example, the polarity of Advocacy & Inquiry is encompassed by the principle of Dialogue. Similarly, the principle of Wise Action encompasses the polarity of Action & Reflection, and the principle of Sustained Engagement encompasses Take Charge & Empower.
- 11) At times we also make notes on the right and left side of the polarity map. On the left would be, “What would be some red flags that our team or organization was starting to over-privilege Task over People?” and then, “If we saw those, what are some actions we could take?” The same would be on the right side, with initial red flags for over-privileging People over Task.

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