

Inspiring Leaders Embrace Differences

Diverse perspectives are both valid and valuable. Leaders who integrate different opinions know that this skill is a magic ingredient in unlocking the creative potential in teams.

There are two key steps to embracing differences successfully.

Step #1: Name opposite preferences in positive terms

When encountering a perspective or preference that is different from your own, it's useful to begin by thinking of the two contrasting preferences (yours and that of the other person) as "opposites." But here's the trick: you want to state both "opposites" in positive terms (rather than labeling one "good" or "bad").

An example:

Two coworkers are assigned to a major client. One co-worker interacts with the clients in a way that is focused primarily on the tasks at hand, with minimal personal interaction. The other spends a good deal of social time with the clients, getting to know them personally. The positive opposites are:



Other examples of opposite preferences that are common at work:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| Continuity | and | Innovation |
| Planning | and | Execution |
| Structured | and | Unstructured |
| Individual | and | Team |
| Research-Based Decision Making | and | Intuitive Decision-Making |
| Focused | and | Expansive |

Notice that the "opposites" are positively described.



Embracing the Opposite

Step #2: Find the upsides and downsides of each preferences

Use the structure of the grid below to write down the two opposite preferences. Then actively consider the benefits and risks associated with both mindsets.

Following through with the earlier example:

| | Focus on the Work | Focus on Relationship | |
|---|--|--|---|
| + | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tasks get completed• Deadlines are met | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connection with the client• Consistent feedback on what's working/not working | + |
| - | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disconnection with the client• Lack of feedback on what's working/not working | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tasks not completed• Deadlines not met | - |



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