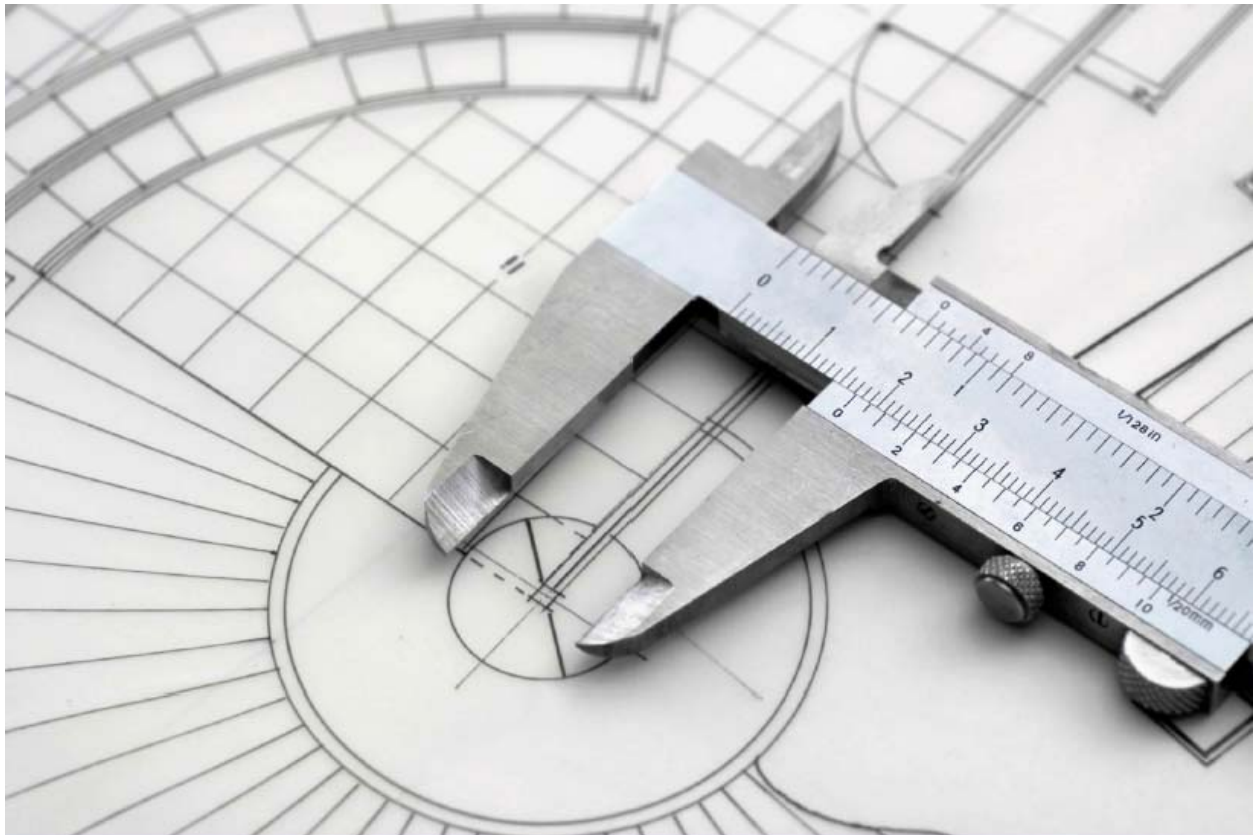


Conquering Chaos

- MINDSET MATTERS -



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Conquering Chaos

- Leadership Mindset and Skills to Create a Collaborative Culture -

Abstract

Traditionally, executives expect leaders to produce results that sustain or build a competitive advantage for the enterprise. Leaders have another more compelling obligation – being authentically transparent in service to teammates, colleagues, clients, and managers. “Leadership is the ability to set direction; motivate and influence others to collaboratively produce results” (Bristol & Yeatts, 2011). A leader’s mindset is “a mental attitude that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations” (Houghton-Mifflin Company, 2006). Chaos results when leaders fail in their responsibility to be of service to their team. This paper creates a framework to analyze chaos, summarizes chaos symptoms and implications and purposes an action framework to achieve a high-performance transformation. Leaders will discover how limiting emotions and challenging behaviors associated with chaos are manageable using the mindsets of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), behavioral communication styles, motivators, Builder-Protector, and outward facing. Leaders will also find how acquiring the appropriate mindset, creating core values, and using team tools can transform an organization’s reputation and energize a team. Leaders significantly enhance their ability to influence by the using the five fundamental mindsets to build trust-based relationships.

Conquering Chaos: Leadership Mindset and Skills

Introduction

Leaders have a principle responsibility to be in service to teammates, colleagues, clients, and managers. Being a leader “is the ability to set direction; motivate and influence others to collaboratively produce results” (Bristol & Yeatts, 2011). Significantly reducing a leader’s ability to influence and produce results is chaos, defined as a condition of disorder or confusion (Houghton-Mifflin Company, 2006). Ambiguity provides the seeds for chaos to grow. Ambiguity or lack of clarity exists when a leader fails to clearly state direction, work expectations, and relationship expectations. As sense-making animals, humans in general and leaders in particular, have a high need for order, consistency, and producing results. In part, it is why the problem-solution model is so compelling. Every action and every thought is focused on answering questions, pushing back the frontiers of chaos, and expanding the bubble of clarity, knowledge, and consistency. Resolving ambiguity is central to a leader’s every action.

To expedite clarity and eliminate chaos, a leader objectively needs to analyze and resolve chaos. A framework to understand chaos and to evaluate mindsets and attitudes objectively helps a leader to assess the results of their actions. Mindsets are an inclination or habit that filters the available options for gaining clarity and subtly restricts a leader’s focus on producing enterprise results. Having a singular focus on business results reduces a leader’s awareness of their responsibility for team member development and growth. The keys to conquering chaos require a leader to understand what mindsets to review, how to gain transparency, and how to influence team member collaboration. With an intentional mindset and an understanding of chaos, a leader can see that what appears to be disorder is, instead, multiple layers of interconnected and interrelated solvable patterns.

Chaos

A leader can better understand chaos from a hierarchical and relationship viewpoint. Paul Glen (2003) defines three layers in an ambiguity hierarchy (environmental, structural, and task, shown in Exhibit 1), where confusion can exist. Lack of layer clarity is the fuel that feeds chaos and originates from an environmental, structural, and task perspective. Chaos-related conflict between team members and organizations comes from interpersonal relationships (Glen, P. 2003). Many interpersonal conflicts have a basis in divergent work approaches, competing interests, and resource competition, not following team norms, performance deficiencies, or poor communication.

Exploring the Layers of Chaos

Using Glen’s three-layer model (Exhibit 1) will enhance a leader’s ability to discern a chaos source and will help expedite resolution. Environmental ambiguity contains the big-picture questions including concerns of identity, purpose, and meaning. **Environmental** clarity shapes direction by determining the big-picture questions

including concerns of identity, purpose, and meaning. As a leader, resolving environmental ambiguity helps build a foundation where ideas and values form motivation. **Structural** clarity is how a leader organizes work productively. Projects are structured using processes that help determine design, choice, and sequencing of tasks. Once defined, projects require clear processes that enroll stakeholders, deliver capability, provide periodic communication, and manage risk. Once a project selection is complete and processes determined, leaders define and validate the essential roles necessary for successful collaboration. When assigning individuals to roles, it is very important to consider more than the technical skills required for completing project tasks. Effective leaders know each team member's technical and interpersonal skill competencies. At the **task** level, a leader must take responsibility for clarifying when projects are finished, the acceptable product quality, and the acceptable behaviors. Each hierarchical layer builds upon the one below. Consequently, if environmental concerns are unattended, the team members' attention will not focus on structure and task related actions. A lack of clarity at a lower level weakens a team's ability to perform at higher levels and reduces the performance capacity of the organization. Each conflict source reduces precision and increases ambiguity. Cumulative conflict at each level, left unresolved over time, diminishes organizational productivity.

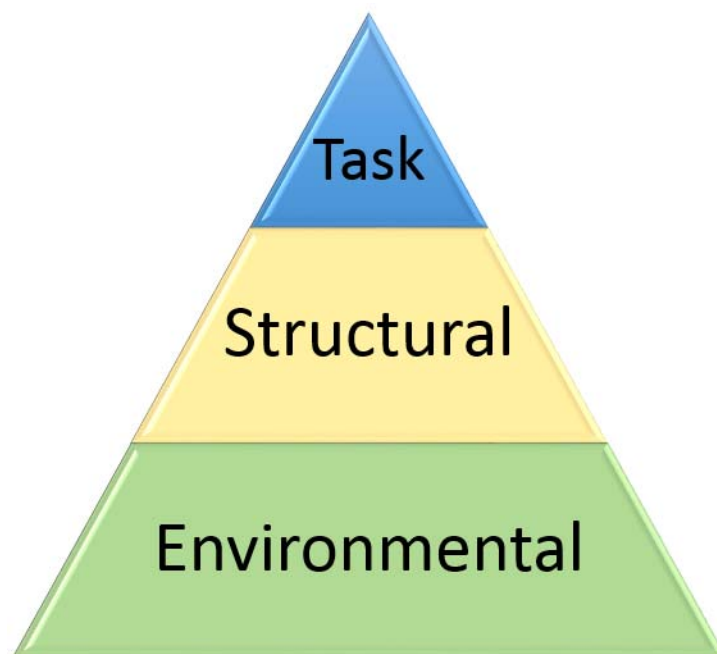


Exhibit 1: Ambiguity hierarchy (Glenn 2003).

Types of Chaos

Frequently, turmoil appears as organizational and personal symptoms (Johnson, R., 1976). **Organizational** chaos can generate from the overt clash between formal authorities, perceived power imbalance, conflicting functional goals, or a struggle over resources. **Personal** chaos is often more subtle, involving role definition, communication

style clashes, and jealousies. Identifying the organizational and individual chaos symptoms is the first step to removing uncertainty and gaining clarity.

Organization turmoil, uncertainty about purpose, values, and strategic alignment adversely affected the enterprise environment. Structural ambiguity is prevalent when work processes are undocumented and stakeholder role expectations are unclear. Interpersonal chaos ambiguity heightens when team roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority is unclear. To build clarity and reduce the impacts of vagueness, a leader needs to communicate environmental, structural, and task issues to the team. A leader reduces the environmental uncertainty by synthesizing and informing the team about external events and impacts. Leaders achieve structural simplicity by using documented business processes, a service delivery lifecycle, and clearly expressing relationship expectations. A firm structural foundation provides boundaries for action. Effective leaders clearly articulate expectations at the task level to set performance and collaboration standards.

High levels of uncertainty and ambiguity can adversely affect collaboration and problem-solving skills. Consequently, concerns about failure to meet quality standards or achieving on-time completion add to stress levels. Stress symptoms can appear in different ways and in many circumstances accompany disruptive emotional displays. Leaders need to pay attention to the organizational and personal stress indicators. Missed deadlines, team turnover, and absenteeism are the most common organizational stress indicators (Exhibit 2). Most leaders are very aware of the personal signs of stress such as blaming others, impatience, and short tempers (Exhibit 3). Personal stress results in the poor treatment of others. For an observant leader, these anxiety symptoms are only indications of chaos-related ambiguity. Enhanced mindset awareness helps to resolve the root causes of stress and promotes collaboration.

- Disputes and disaffection within the group
- Increase in staff turnover
- Increase in complaints and grievances
- Increased reports of stress
- Difficulty in attracting new staff
- Poor performance
- Customer dissatisfaction or complaints

Exhibit 2: Signs of organizational stress.

- Blaming others and making excuses
- Diminishing the contributions of others
- Spreading innuendo and rumor
- Exaggerating the importance of their contribution
- Demanding respect because of positional power or service longevity
- Being impatient or frequently short-tempered
- Talking down to others, Acting entitled to special treatment or privileges
- Justifying their poor treatment of others
- Being overly critical of others
- Complaining about the lack of opportunity

Exhibit 3: Signs of personal stress.

As organizations strive to achieve goals, teams must overcome turmoil-related challenges. Uncertainty and ambiguity leave space for unresolved issues between team members and stakeholders. Unresolved conflicts become seductive distractions, further feeding turmoil. This lack of lucidity and concentration then impedes productivity, hinders innovation, saps motivation, and diminishes team productivity (Glen, 2003). Often, team members focus on venting frustrations and gossiping rather than the collaborative pursuit of stated goals. As a result, teams miss deadlines, quality suffers, and clients lose confidence. As turmoil and conflict increase without resolution, intense situations may arise between organizations and team members. Long-standing conflicts may cause highly charged, emotion-laden exchanges among members, resulting in legal problems between members and possibly for the business. If team members become increasingly frustrated with the level of organizational or personal conflict, they may seek employment elsewhere. Turnover-related churn creates extended disruption during replacement on boarding and integration into the team. In extreme cases, the project cancellation may result when several members depart. Organization-generated conflict may cause members to become discouraged if they feel there is no resolution possible or if their concerns go unrecognized. A prolonged, unresolved stress experience can adversely affect professional and personal lives. Personal stress indicators may appear differently in individuals, as problems sleeping, loss of appetite or overeating, headaches, or becoming unapproachable (Brookins, 2015). At work, team members may avoid meetings, reduce work quality, or become overly defensive to mitigate stress-related symptoms. If work-induced stress increases, the sense of hope diminishes and may lower self-esteem. Instead of feeling rewarded and fulfilled, team members working in turmoil-ridden organizations come to see the work as grinding drudgery. They view success as being unlikely or, even worse, out of their control. Mindful leaders transform organizational conflict into a positive. Transformation begins as team members recognize that turmoil and conflict-induced drama causes collateral damage to the organization and each other. Recognition of the cost of chaos is the springboard for helpful action.

Stopping the Madness and Turning the Corner

Leaders need to provide direction for constructive change. A leader's intentions to help others by removing uncertainty and ambiguity are core to conquering chaos. However, good intentions and hoping for the best are not enough to produce change. The transformation from a chaos-laden reactive organization into a high-performance team requires a leader to be both smart in **WHAT** to do and knowledgeable in **HOW** to work with others (Lencioni, 2012). A leader is a steward of valuable resources for one reason, to produce results. A result for the organization creates new or improved capabilities that sustain a competitive advantage. Equally important, is the leadership-oriented results that help others to grow personally and thrive. Leadership-oriented results mentor and inspire team members to fulfil their potential and make a positive difference in the world. To create a collaborative climate where high-performance is the norm, leaders must produce organizational results, the **WHAT**, and advance team members' interpersonal skills, the **HOW**. Kuppler, in *Building the Culture Advantage* (2014), provides a three-phase action approach (Exhibit 4) for achieving balanced outcomes in both areas.

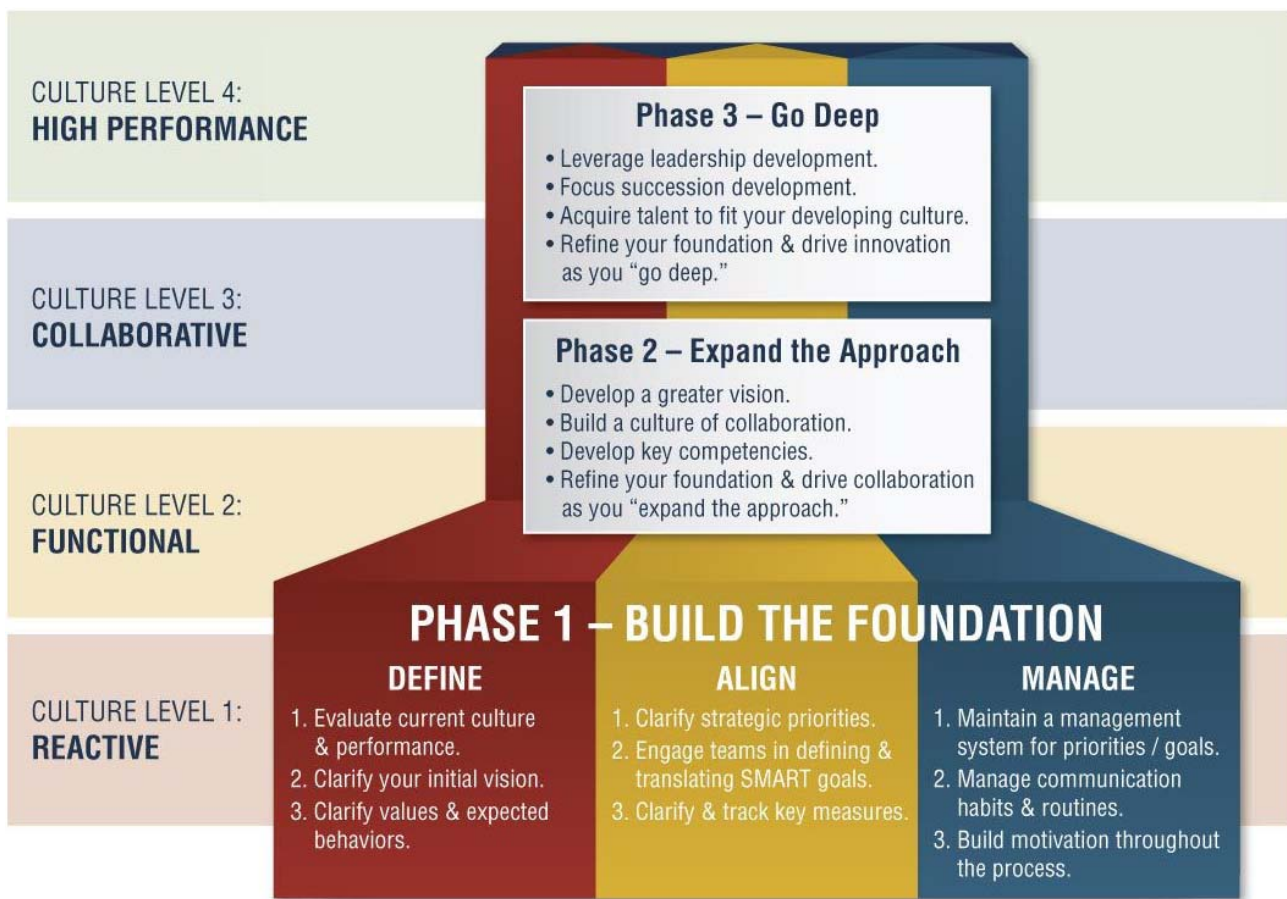


Exhibit 4: Developing a performance culture (Kuppler, 2014).

Phase 1 builds a foundation for moving from being reactive to a well-functioning organization by clarifying expectations, linking values, and purpose. When leaders implement strategic priorities, SMART goals, measures, and sustainable management practices, team members align intentions, thoughts, and actions. Additionally, Meier

in *Getting Results the Agile Way* (2010) provides insights (Exhibit 5) to behaviors leaders need to develop personally and foster within their team.

- Outcomes over activities
- Being responsible for what's important
- Fail fast... go again
- Have a bias for action
- Create time boxes
- Setting boundaries is a key to success
- Spend the right time energy on the right things
- Focus on success – the day, the week, the year
- Use your strengths

Exhibit 5: Foundation-oriented behaviors (Meier, 2010).

A healthy organization will improve over time (Lencioni, 2012). Improvements happen when leaders initiate action to help others and support things going right. Leaders help organizations improve by creating a learning environment, identifying serious concerns, and rapidly recovering from mistakes. A leader's understanding and objective self-knowledge, as well as knowledge concerning each team member is essential to developing **HOW** to work together. Team members' abilities to acquire technical and interpersonal skill development are easier when trust-based relations form the Phase foundation. For a team or an organization to become cooperative, four mindsets form the foundation for a collaborative culture.

Leadership Mindsets

Leadership mindset sets the overall tone for organizational culture and personal performance. "The biggest benefits of having the right mental approach is that it helps leaders to be more creative, operate in a more relaxed way, and be open to trying novel approaches" (Brooks, 2014). A collaborative, results-oriented leadership style creates success at multiple levels, with individual people, teams, organizations, and the larger community. Mutually contributing to a larger service-oriented goal is what shifts peoples' viewpoints from trying to gain more control to becoming helpful to others. Emotional intelligence, communication styles and motivators, builder-protector, and outward facing mindsets allow leaders to gain a new perspective to align intentions, thoughts, and actions. Mindset accelerates the transformation into a collaborative culture.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, known as emotional quotient (EQ), is a powerful mindset for leadership skill enrichment. Being able to recognize and manage emotions and knowing how reactions influence thoughts and actions are the key to personal understanding and sustaining trust-based relationships with others (Exhibit 6). Daniel Goleman (2006) defines it as, "emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions

in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict.” Dr. Friedland (2013) documents EQ physiology, amygdala hijacking, and the naturally related cortisol and adrenaline “chemical cocktail” which produces fundamental fight, flight, or freeze responses. This cocktail can adversely affect decision-making and interactions with others and is a contributing factor to the climate of chaos. Fortunately, individuals can improve their EQ with awareness of emotions and objectively exploring other mindsets.

	Self (Personal Competence)	Other (Social Competence)
Recognition	Self-awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional self-awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence 	Social Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Organizational awareness • Service
Regulation	Self-management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional self-control • Transparency • Adaptability • Achievement • Initiative • Optimism 	Relationship Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspirational leadership • Influence • Developing others • Change catalyst • Conflict management, Building bonds • Teamwork and collaboration

Exhibit 6: Goleman’s framework of emotional competencies (Mersino, 2007).

Communication Flexibility

Communication and rapport are key to leadership success. Leaders create a way of working which enables diverse skills and interests to collaborate and bring out the very best in each team member. Leadership by example sets the behavioral standards for team and client interaction. To sustain rapport and trust-based relationships, leaders need to understand individual communication styles, recognize the communication styles of others, and develop communication style flexibility. Communication skills require a high level of self-awareness and understanding of stakeholder communication styles. A leader that knows how his or her stress-induced communication pattern adversely impacts others can develop approaches which enhance collaboration. By becoming more aware of others’ perceptions, a leader can adapt more readily to communication styles of teammates and essentially, “speak

the language of leadership” (Bristol & Yeatts, 2010). Style flexibility does not mean being a chameleon. Instead, authentic leaders establish exquisite rapport through communication style flexibility when aligning behaviors that fit and resonate with teammates (Bristol & Yeatts, 2011). It is important to recognize that communication styles exist along a continuum. The two major communication style continuums are a task focus-people focus and aggressive-reflective approach (Exhibit 7).

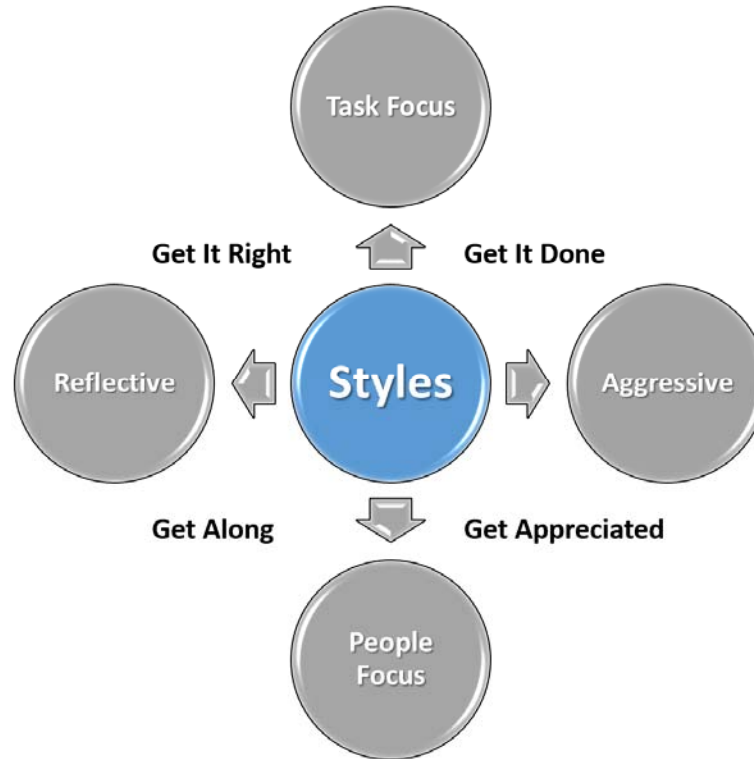


Exhibit 7: Communication style behaviors (Bonnstetter & Suiter, 2013).

This fundamental mindset can help to delineate style tendencies and distinguishing behaviors to help a leader recognize styles in others. Knowing the tendencies of others, a leader can align natural inclinations to work assignments and more accurately establish rapport (Exhibit 8).

Tendencies:	DRIVER (D) Direct	SOCIALIZER (I) Friendly	RELATER (S) Cooperative	THINKER (C) Analytical
Primary Orientation:	Results		Quality	
Looking for:	Results	The Experience	Harmony and Security	Information
Typically:	Likes their own way; decisive & strong opinion	Gets excited; optimistic	Likes to be helpful; team oriented	Seeks data, asks many question; methodical, systematic, process oriented
Questions:	What?... a results oriented question	Who?... a person oriented question	Why?... a personal non-goal question	How?... a technical or analytical question
Dislikes:	Someone wasting their time; trying to decide for them	Boring explanations; wasting time with too many facts	Rejection; Being treated impersonally	Making an error; being unprepared; spontaneity
Reacts to Stress By:	Taking charge; taking more control	"Selling" their ideas; argumentative	Becoming silent, withdraws, introspective	Seeking more data or information
Recognizing				
Tone of Voice:	Strong, clear, confident, fast paced	Animated, friendly, rambling explanations	Low-voice tone, warm, detailed oriented	Monotone, precise, cool, aloof
Volume of Voice:	Loudest, forceful	Fairly loud, casual	Soft volume, methodical	Quiet volume, deliberate
Tempo of Voice:	Rapid pace, limited emotion	Rapid pace, friendly	Slower pace, warm	Slow pace, Competent
Body Language	Uses direct eye contact, points finger, leans toward you	Smiles a lot, uses expressive gestures	Small hand gestures, relaxed, non-emotional	Very few if any hand gestures, direct eye contact, controlled

Exhibit 8: Communication preference table (Bonnstetter & Suiter, 2004; Alessandra & O'Connor, 1990, 1996).

Motivators are the driving forces compelling movement into action (Exhibit 9). Recognizing, aligning, and rewarding an individual's motivators increases personal engagement and elevates team performance.

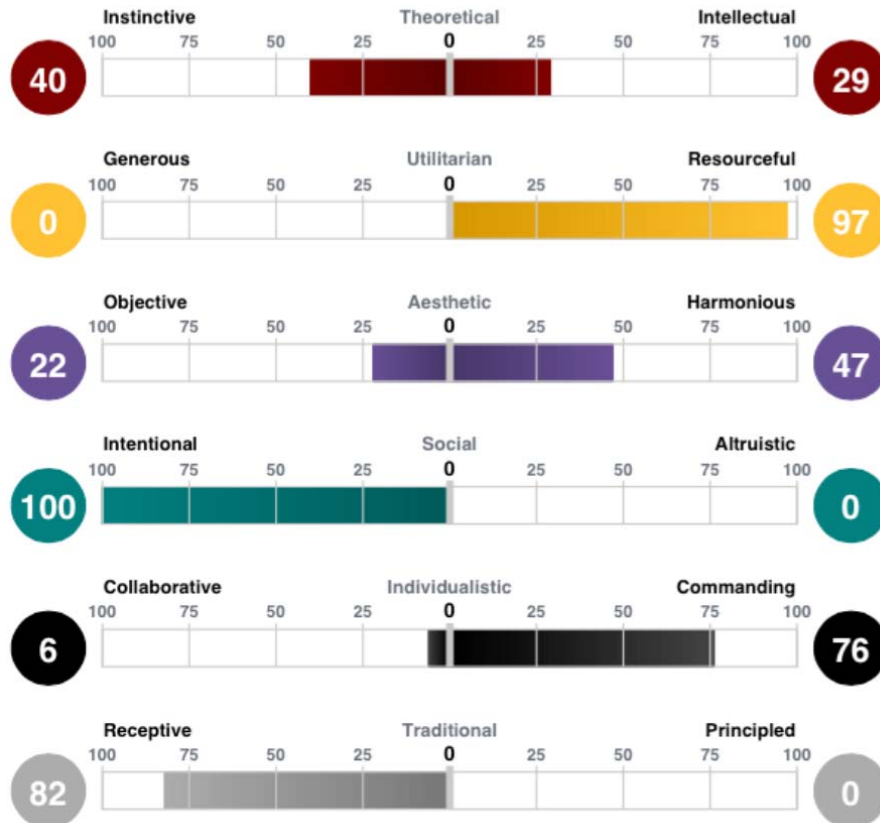


Exhibit 9: Motivators (Bonnstetter & Bowers, 2013).

An effective team-building program encourages individuals to understand and appreciate diversity. Team members learn about differences in motivators, communication, thinking, and problem-solving styles. Team members sharing assessment results learn about their preferences and learn how to understand others.

Builder-Protector

In *Navigating the Growth Curve*, James Fischer (2006) states the case for the builder-protector mindset is a measurement of self-reliance versus cautiousness. It is a critical mindset for a leader to assess personal and team capacity to receive change, respond with confidence, and attain identified goals. Making decisions, assessing team execution, and knowing how the builder-protector mindset impacts productivity is essential for removing chaos and building a collaborative culture.

A builder mindset generates fresh concepts, becomes a champion for innovative initiatives, and finds ways to expand the organizational productivity by enhancing profitability and reducing expenses. A builder challenges the status-quo by improving the way things are accomplished and helping others. Builders are risk-accepting and encouraging of growth. Having confidence in the processes and systems, a builder tends to be confident in the company's financial foundation and the marketplace future (Fisher, 2006).

A protector mindset is risk-adverse, prefers a deliberate pace, and may appear to be apprehensive of change. Being conservative, a protector may lack confidence in the team strengths and is intentional to embrace an optimistic future. Protectors tend to be skeptical of new methods and perceived instability. "Protectors tend to keep the brake pedal on, even during times of rapid expansion and react cautiously to leadership's ability to take the company forward" (Fisher, 2006). Each builder or protector mindset has related communication behaviors and related emotions. When a leader shares his/her personal tendencies, this transparency promotes discovery and openness among the team.

Outward Facing

Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (1923) is a philosophic work which provides a helpful distinction between an individual's way of consciousness, interaction, and being when engaging with others. Buber's basic modes are word-pairs termed: "I-Thou" and "I-It." An outward facing, or "I-Thou" mindset, reflects a way of being where another person matters. The dreams, hopes, fears, and concerns of others matter, just as the leaders' personal dreams, hopes, fears, and concerns matter. With an inward facing or "I-It" mindset, people experience others more as an object and less human. Also, as an object, a person can be seen as an obstacle, blocking progress, or as a vehicle or tool to provide an advantage, or an irrelevancy, just invisible. A prolonged inward facing interaction, can result in a "better than, must be seen as, worse than, or I deserve" attitude which creates

interpersonal barriers or boxes (Arbinger, 2009). These interpersonal boxes help a person justify poor behaviors and cultivate debilitating emotions, which contribute to chaos and stress (Exhibit 10).

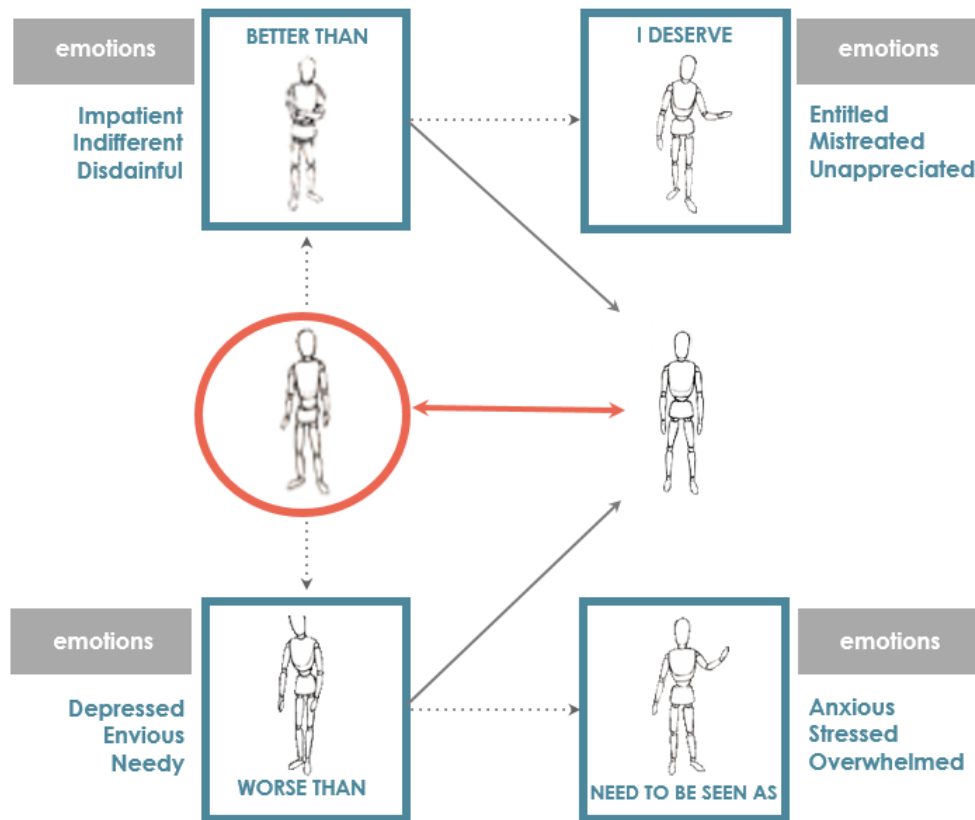


Exhibit 10: Inward facing attitudes and emotions (Arbinger Institute, 2009).

Achieving Breakthrough Results

Breakthrough results can occur when leaders use the leadership pyramid (Exhibit 11) and collaboration (Exhibit 12) diagrams developed by the Arbinger Institute (2008, 2009) along with enhanced mindset awareness. A leader with an outward facing mindset, communication style flexibility, emotional awareness of self and others, and builder-protector mindfulness can use this knowledge and related skills to guide a team. These mindsets accelerate the transformational journey from a reactive mode to a high-performing collaborative teamwork. Most importantly, collaborative teams produce outrageous results. The collaborative efforts significantly enhance team capabilities and help teammates make a positive difference in each other lives, for others in the company, and the larger community. Personal and team mindset awareness and reviewing the quality of interactions along with work outcomes is the basis for in-progress adjustments and significantly contributes to collaborative results.

Leadership Pyramid

The Arbinger leadership pyramid (Exhibit 11) illustrates a four-tiered approach for building relationships and helping things go right. (Arbinger Institute, 2008). "The pyramid suggests that we should spend much more time

and effort helping things go right than dealing with things that are going wrong” (Arbinger Institute, 2008, p. 16). Regrettably, many leaders spend most of the time dealing with things that are going wrong. The leadership pyramid foundation is an outward facing mindset that builds trust-based relationships. In the next pyramid tier, leaders enhance their influence by asking questions, listening, and learning, instead of giving directions. Near the top of the pyramid, a leader develops others by actively sharing their business, technical, and interpersonal skills. When leaders operate with an outward mindset and appropriately use the other pyramid tiers, their ability to influence increases.

A leader’s capacity to produce results comes down to one thing, the ability to influence others. Building trust-based relationships and influencing others to produce results is the foundation for converting chaos into collaboration. The leadership pyramid helps leaders focus the actions to help things go right.

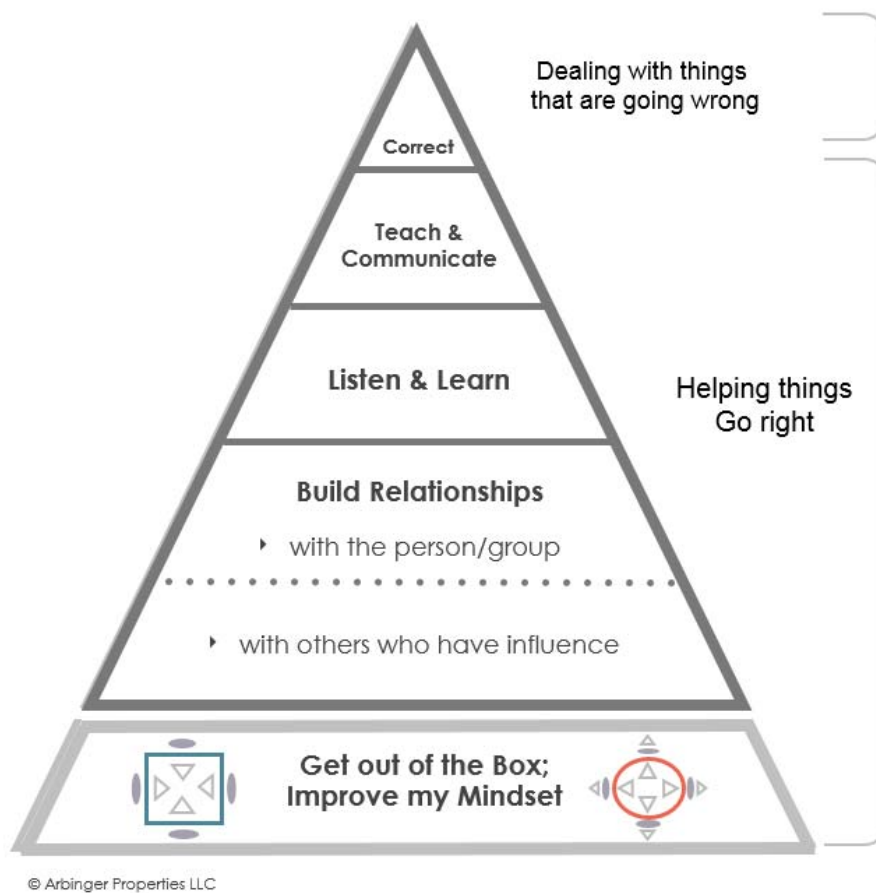


Exhibit 11: Leadership pyramid, adapted from Arbinger (2006, p. 211).

Collaboration Diagram

Enterprise use of work groups and teams are a dramatically growing trend in the last decade (Lawler, 1998). Executives are discovering that integrating diverse perspectives, skills, and knowledge enhances innovation,

improves decisions, and produces results. Leaders agree that trust is an essential ingredient for developing collaborative groups (Coleman, 1988; Jones & George, 1998; McAllister, 1995). Collaboration is particularly crucial to success; a deficit in the ability to work cooperatively with peers, colleagues, clients, and managers is the most common reason for the lack of harmony and chaos (Sweeney, 1999). The movement toward team-based work competencies that promote collaboration are taking on an increased importance. The collaboration diagram (Exhibit 12) provides a means to assess relationship quality from the client, colleague, team member, and executive perspective. A leader begins by listing the names of the significant relationships in the four quadrants. Deeply contemplating how each person contributes to the enterprise goals using an outward facing, I-Thou mindset. This reflection process allows a leader to gain clarity about the outcomes desired and challenges for each individual. Using a simple 1-10 scale, where ten is complete lucidity, a leader can consider the clarity level for each quadrant. Taking actions that help others is the second step and critical to improving teamwork. The action gap is determined when leaders conduct an objective review of their alignment between intentions, behaviors, and actions. A collaborative culture advances as leaders measure success by what others can do because of their efforts. When a leader's mindset is outward, the objectives and obstacles of others matter and that motivates the leader to help. Simply stated, metrics measure the impact of a leader.

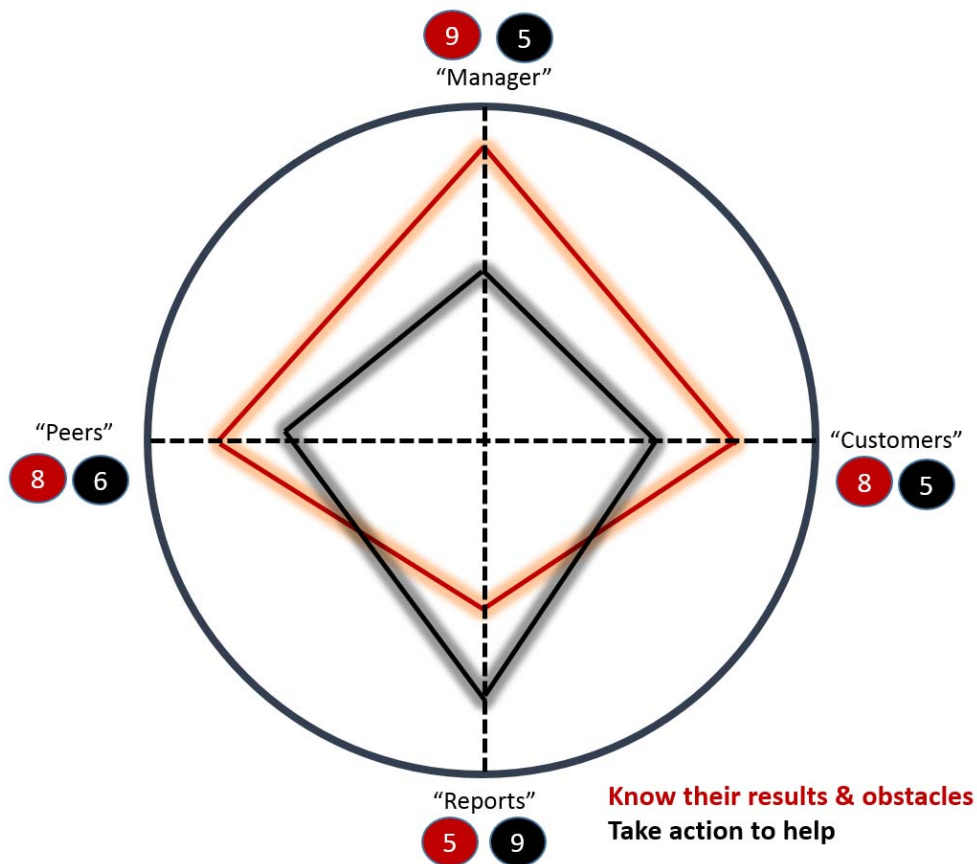


Exhibit 12: Collaboration Diagram, adapted from Arbinger (2014).

Conclusion

Mindset matters. When leaders think in terms of abundance (I-Thou or outward facing), and avoid a scarcity mindset (I-It or inward facing), their ability to inspire, motivate, and influence increases. The team devotes energy to creating more alternatives, expanding opportunities, producing meaningful results, and sustaining trust-based relationships. Mindset-mindful leaders work for the good of the team, not for themselves. Being in service to others has a positive by-product; leaders are rewarded with loyalty, hard work, innovation, and collaboration. The collaborative culture results in enhanced work quality and meaningful results accomplished in less time. With a well-formed mindset, leaders see the opportunities and the upside of things, and are free from the negativity of others. This does not mean leaders should avoid looking for flaws or stop using critical thinking when evaluating ideas. It does mean that leaders need to use mindset-related skills and spend more time finding solutions than finding problems. A philosophy of collaboration honors diversity and values leaders and teams who place their interests in helping others. Collaborative team efforts contribute to a lasting enterprise competitive advantage and a culture based upon trust-based relationships.



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Phil is internationally recognized as an expert in accelerating organizational performance. He has over 25 years of strategic planning, business process improvement, enterprise-wide project management, leadership experience.

About Projectivity Solutions

Recognized as the leading expert in accelerating organizational performance and Growth Curve Strategy™, Projectivity Solutions provides consulting, mentoring, and leadership development for executives and their teams, enabling them to be more productive and profitable. Projectivity Solutions' precision services combine essential knowledge and skills with a way-of-working that accelerates organizational performance. Services are performance proven to deliver organizational excellence including increasing profitability, reducing operational costs, improving product quality, enhancing customer service, attracting and retaining highly motivated staff, and building trust and collaboration at all levels of an organization.

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